

Various schools of feminism coexist in this world. India too entertains different trends of feminism from Liberal Feminism to Humanist Feminism.

These schools of thought naturally adopt different notions and views regarding the solution of women's problems and issues.

This book is the compilation of articles, talks and papers at seminars and conferences of Malladi Subbamma the reputed humanist - feminist. They bring freshness of approach, newness of ideas, thought - provoking solutions, and vigorous advocacy to the notice of the readers. This volume is a valuable addition to feminist literature.





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**WOMEN  
IN  
CHANGING SOCIETY**

**MALLADI SU**

**1994**

**MALLADI SUBBAMMA TRUS  
HYDERABAD**

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## PREFACE

### My Literary Voyage

The woman of this country is bound in slavery by the chains forged by men and is caught in the death-trap of religion, thanks to lack of education and knowledge. She is being ground to earth and oppressed. Deprived of economic freedom due to her ever being a ward, she is being subjected to social exploitation on account of the existence of double morality. Do you deny that she is an unfortunate being? If you say no, what is to be done to improve her situation? That is why, for the progress of society, for ushering in just and equal society, for the freedom and right to equality of women, I am of the view that writing about them and for them is my duty. The longing to serve the womankind by attacking the vicious social customs and burning the abominable atrocities against women with the fire of my literary twigs has inspired me; it has moved me to write. My anguish is to bring out into the open the defects in the social system, the obnoxious customs and practices meant for oppressing women and to point out the utter confusion that prevails in the woman's world. My objective is to expose the dirt, murkiness and immorality in the society so that a blow may be struck in favour of women's freedom and her right to equality. In fact a woman's life is a vicious circle. Each problem of hers can be the subject-matter of an article or a story or a novel. Some content themselves with posing the problem and leaving the solution to be worked out by the readers. Yet others choose to show the way out for the solution of the problem. It is just not enough to describe the symptoms of the disease; the true doctor is one who can find out the real cause of the disease and nurse the patient back to health. Similarly, the writer with creativity, realistic appreciation, social consciousness and capacity for critical assessment can alone explore the secrets and bring out the truths of life. The intense desire to expose the deplorable condition of woman in all fields of life-social, economic, political, cultural and moral - to the public gaze, to examine it with an integral view and suggest to the readers solutions to the women's problems has enthused me to undertake this literary venture. This is the basis of my literary voyage.

Traditions, customs and theories ought to undergo a change along with passage of time. Without change the very basis of existence loses ground. Revolution involves fundamental changes of great magnitude. Philosophical revolution has to precede social revolution. Literature is the reflection of human life. To exhibit the suppressed woman's life through literature so that right-minded persons may strive to better it and to kindle rays of light in her life is my ambition. The vicious serpent of man-ordained culture has struck the woman with its fangs. The poisonous serpents of tradition, custom, pseudo-holiness have been hissing at her all through her life. The system of marriage and marital life are restricting and hindering her freedom and happiness. The woman has become a prisoner of the very society intended and evolved for the welfare of humankind. She is bound hand and foot by prescriptions and prohibitions. She is reduced to a state of confusion; she has become unaware of her duty to herself. It is my earnest aspiration to bring to light the misdeeds of the men, the degeneration of the society, economic inequality and political disregard in respect of women. Hence, I have chosen novels, stories, articles and speeches as vehicles of my expression.

Some misguided men heckle me and present me with titles such as 'hater of men', 'female chauvinist', 'destroyer of family peace'. I do not feel perturbed, nor am I annoyed with them. But when pity is showered upon women, when a woman is talked of in low terms, when it is pointed out that 'only a woman is capable of such misdeed', when in each committee one place is set apart for women out of so-called sympathy, or one office is given to her as a matter of grace, my blood boils at such a social system. When tedious and routine jobs like those of a primary school teacher, nurse and typist are set apart for women on the ground that only women are fit for them, I am pained. Is it the blindness of men or their defect in hearing? They do not see the writing on the wall. They do not hear the death knell. But so long as women do not raise their voice in protest and revolt, this state of affairs cannot be altered for the better.

The slogan for equality has become a fashion nowadays. Today those men who dare proclaim that women cannot claim equality, deny the principle of representation to women, justify the present inferior status of women and canvass for lower wages for female labour are scarce in number. Many men who cherish male domination lie low; but they stoop to conquer. They make flamboyant

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pronouncements about woman's progress. They even pass law ostensibly for her benefit and advantage. They advocate woman's cause. But all these speeches and laws are there only for people to hear and see. In practice, the woman has been reduced to nothing. The master strategists of male chauvinism have acted through subterfuge and sabotage. They have seen to it that the schemes and strategies, projects and plans intended for advancement of women go astray. All religious preachers rush to declare that woman is to be respected and that there is no scope for inequality between man and woman in the eyes of God and Law. The days when women believed in such 'Purushasuktas' (Men's proclamation) are gone indeed.

Women began to be considered as equal human beings after the declaration of rights of human beings in the American, French and Russian Revolutions. Women have to bestir themselves to strive to solve the problems of the society. Women are confused and confounded because of their wrong belief that their problems are not part and parcel of the social problems. It is an illusion to think that there is no intimate relationship between the position of women in society and the social system; it is an indiscretion too. The object of the present-day women's movement is not just improving of the position and conditions of women. That women should seek to solve the world's problems and contribute to the struggle for peace has to be an important object of the women's movement. It is not fair on the part of women to wait for the men to solve the problems of the country. When they are fighting for equal rights it looks odd if they leave the men to fight for a better society. It is not only improper but fruitless. Dynamic women and socially-conscious women ought to take active part in the struggle for social transformation, progress and even rebellion, if necessary. Only when women realise that their troubles and problems are intertwined with the people's misery and sorrow can they gain equality with men. As such, the need for a change in attitude in respect of the ideology and practice of the women's movement becomes inevitable.

I am the first one among those who disbelieve the dictum that women's problems can be solved by hatred towards men. To state that all women are virtuous and that all men are tyrants is far from the truth. It is not only inhuman but a great crime. But when we speak or write of a group we take into consideration ninety per cent of the group to arrive at its general characterisation. Hence, I have inveighed in my articles against male-dominated society in genera-

I am sure that all lovers of independence, freedom, democracy and equality will share my concern for womankind.

I will feel highly rewarded even if one woman social worker appreciates the idea and spirit immanent in this collection.

*Malladi Subbamma*

### **TRANSLATOR'S NOTE**

I felt attracted towards Ms. Subbamma's collection of essays on two counts viz. the nature of her ideas and her forceful expression. It should be no wonder that I, as a rationalist and humanist, appreciate her views on the topics dealt with. Translation is usually an onerous task for it is rather difficult to convey the spirit of the author with equal force and emphasis in another language. I have tried to do justice to the author using her idiom without doing violence to the language:

*M.V. Ramamurty*

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am indebted to Mr. V.M. Tarkunde, the illustrious humanist and civil rights campaigner for the encouragement he has given me by writing the Foreword.

I am indeed grateful to Mr. M.V. Ramamurty for taking the trouble to translate my articles into English.

The contents of this book comprise my articles, talks on Radio and T.V., Work-papers at Seminars of Universities and Voluntary Organisations, speeches at Conferences, articles in the Press and special numbers of magazines. Some of these were published in book form under the title 'Women, Tradition and Culture' by M/s. Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi. Similarly some were printed in the book 'Saga of Women's Struggles' published by M/s. Indian Atheist Publishers, New Delhi. I express my hearty thanks to these publishing concerns and especially Mr. S.K. Ghai and Mr. Sanal Edamaruku chiefs of Sterling Publishers and Indian Atheist Publishers respectively for permitting me to republish them to be included herein.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not mention Mr. B.V. Satyamurty the famous artist for designing the cover page and proprietors of M/s. Vamsi Art Printers for bringing out this book beautifully in time.

*Malladi Subbamma*

## FOREWORD

Emancipation of Indian women is the main topic of this interesting book. It would not be an exaggeration to say that no other topic is of greater importance for the freedom and progress of the Indian people. This is not only because women constitute about half of the population of the country. The other and more important reason why women's emancipation is of primary importance is that women as mothers play a vital role in the development of the intellectual and moral attributes of children. Women in their capacity as mothers are at present the main carriers of the orthodoxy and blind faith which prevail in most sections of Indian society. Since growth of rationalism is necessary for the freedom and progress of every people, women's emancipation must be regarded as the pre-condition of Indian renaissance.

Like most other societies, Indian society is male-dominated. Physical and economic superiority of men is, however, not the main cause of women's servitude. The main cause is the long established tradition which says that cooking food, rearing children and looking after household chores constitute the only sphere of female occupation. This tradition is shared by men and women alike. That is why even in families characterised by mutual affection between husband and wife, women occupy a position of palpable inferiority. In a society dominated by tradition, female servitude is largely self-imposed.

Freedom consists of the ability of a person to live a life of physical well-being and mental development. It is the scope of mental development-intellectual, moral and aesthetic-which distinguishes the human from animal life. Women in our society are not free mainly because opportunities for mental development are not available to most of them. This is the main feature of present-day female servitude. Women's emancipation implies a process by which women will have the same scope of intellectual, moral and aesthetic development as men.

Since women's emancipation is essential for the freedom and progress of the entire society, the movement for equality between the sexes should not be an exclusively women's movement. Although progressive women must take the lead, the movement for women's liberation must be a joint effort of both women and men.

Besides women's emancipation, this book deals with many interesting topics. The book is bound to be a valuable addition to one's library.

V.M. TARKUNDE  
NEW DELHI

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## DO WOMEN HAVE SPECIAL PROBLEMS?

This question is often raised by well-meaning men. They are of the view that the problems of men and women are the same, as part and parcel of the problems of humankind. Both man and woman constitute a family. If one suffers, the other is bound to suffer. Man and woman are equal. Hence, their problems are the same. Thus runs the argument. Assuming this to be true, without admitting, it is a fact that men face the same problems as those of women, but in a different form. Yet, it cannot be gainsaid that women have additional problems which are sometimes qualitatively different. But then, it must be kept in mind that all women do not have problems of one and the same form.

Nature has made man and woman different in their bodies and in their mental make-up. Therefore, some of their problems are different. That there is equality between men and women in respect of position and status is far from truth. Experience belies that statement.

Women suffer from some disabilities which are absent in the case of men. A married woman goes to her parents-in-law's house to reside with her husband. In reality she is a transplant in the new home comprising the husband's brothers, their wives and the husband's sisters, besides her parents-in-law. The life of a newly married woman (say just after the initial round of love, affection and regard has evaporated) in a joint family is tantamount to a circus feat of balancing on a thin wire, which is the husband's affection for her. Do men in India have this experience and can they appreciate their wives' problems? The wearer knows where the shoe pinches.

A child widow marries again and the society springs upon its feet too look at it with disfavour. No such disapproval is there for widowers who remarry.

If by inadvertence or force of circumstances a woman slips into the pit of immorality, she is condemned to live with a blemish to the end of her life. Nobody will come forward to marry her. If a child is born to her, even the innocent child is scorned. But the

man who is responsible for her motherhood goes scot free. Society does not condemn him nor does he repent. If the same mistake is committed by a man, he can marry with respect and lead a happy life. Immorality among married persons is also subject to the same rule. The married man escapes censure and blame but the married woman is hounded out of respectable society. Her conduct will be described as reprehensible. Thus, there is one set of moral principles for men and quite a different one for women. Is this not a case of special problem for women?

In a family with many children, the man will have no problems other than financial. But the woman has several problems. She loses her health. She has to spend a lot of time in rearing the children. She has to suffer the indignities and insults hurled by her annoyed husband. As a mother, she is much more affected by the illness of the undernourished and enfeebled children. Is it not thus evident that there is a lot of difference in the pain felt and responsibilities shouldered by man and woman?

Yet another aspect of the matter shall not escape our attention. Man works for earning a livelihood for his family. The woman works from morn to eve to run the home and to rear the children. Man's labour is counted. He labour is not taken into account. She is despised as a parasite by her husband. That is why many women are coming forward to accept jobs outside homes. But then, a working woman's lot is much more difficult. She returns home tired after heavy work in her office or factory or field, yet she is forced to assume domestic duties at once. Running the home is her job and not her husband's, even if he were unemployed. Thus, a working woman bears the burden double in magnitude to that of man. Is this not a special issue that baffles women?

Every person is likely to entertain some ideas, have certain ideals and cherish various hopes. But in the case of woman, she does not have the opportunity or the privilege of striving for their fulfilment and achievement. Her social, cultural, and economic condition prevents her from making any effort in that direction.

Just as children, youth, and aged persons do have problems of their own, so also do women have special issues to face and solve. There is no use ignoring this basic fact. Wisdom lies in recognising reality and making efforts to eliminate the disabilities suffered by women.

## OUR CULTURE INDEED !

Even though some practices and customs are hopelessly bad, become meaningless with the passage of time, turn out to be harmful when implemented, prove useless and even inflict suffering on us, we do not give them up easily. That is our peculiar feature; in fact that is our goal of life too. Our fatalistic outlook, cowardice, inertia, superstition and orthodox traditions do not permit us to see the light of life; they do not allow us to advance forward. To praise ourselves, to consider ourselves great intellectuals and virtuous persons is the particular habit of our nation; in reality it is our national weakness.

This is our sacred Bharat. Our culture is in contra-distinction to other cultures. Hinduism is the only religion of its kind. To be born into this religion is the consequence of our good deeds in past lives. That too, to be born as a housewife is the result of so many good ceremonies and prayers. After all, it is the woman who gives birth to children, fosters them and perpetuates the family and the human race. The way the Hindu woman thinks, not only glorifying herself in such manner and considering the Hindus as the best of the people, is a symptom of our nation's disease. The chronic disease grows like cancer. It is very difficult to find a remedy for it. What are the causes for this kind of ethos? How did this outlook grow? Why did it arise?

Religion is the basic cause of this disease. The monster of religion dwarfs the humanity in us and reduces us to life-less persons. When it comes to woman, the religion grows into madness and she behaves in a hysterical manner. Heightened emotion, anger and envy take the field. That sort of religion destroy the individuality of a woman and tortures her to the utmost.

Religion has hypnotised man and gained control over his life and mind. In the name of morality, scriptures, and life after death it has enslaved man. It became easier for it to attack and conquer the woman. It seems to have addressed man in the following words. "Oh! man! I will make you superior if you listen to me. I will get you a high status. But the only condition is: I will be the master of your destiny. Do you agree to my terms"? The man fell into the trap. He vowed that he would obey the commands of religion.

Then the monster of the serpent engulfed him. Now he has no time or opportunity to breathe or to think. His thoughts are always full of religion and tradition; he has become incapable of even reminding himself of his humanity. Religion has flourished. It conceived scriptures; it laid down moral codes. It placed man on a high pedestal. It commanded that the wife would become the servant of the husband as the first step and later the man would be a slave to religion. In that intoxicated state of mind the man agreed to the proposal. In this indiscreet manner he became a puppet in its hands. This is the story of the aboriginal man and religion. The first and foremost betrayal and harm was the creation of differences between men and women. That is why the great writer Chalam has stated thus: "there are no women in this country; there are only men and their shadows."

The idea that woman was created for the pleasure of man, that she is his property, that she should be subordinate to him and that she gets salvation in this world and in after-life only through her husband are being taught to the woman from her childhood. Modernism condemns these ideas. It propounds that the woman is not a property of man, that she is an individual and that she too has wants and desires. It advocates equality between the man and the woman. While modernism calls upon men and women to lead happy married lives with mutual love and affection, religion preaches that a woman can attain name and fame only by serving her husband. A verse in "Kasi Khandam", a literary work, has succinctly stated the same ideas thus: Religion ordains several tasks and prescribes attitudes for the women. She is to obey her husband. She should not exhibit her learning nor talent in conversation before her husband. She must not get angry even if her husband scolds her. She must never give a retort to her husband. She must feel pleasure and pain depending upon the moods of her husband. She has to serve her husband sexually with a pleasant face even when, in reality she is in sorrowful mood. She is ordered by religion to recite these sayings. Religious persons make propaganda in the name of culture by propagating stories of women who served their lords, like Sita and Savithri, and those of faith associated with "sacred" places and such other unscientific theories.

According to religion, there is only one thing that does not demand any change at any time. That is the aspect of culture. Our culture has delineated the ideological structure necessary for binding a woman hand and foot in all sectors of life, including social, economic, and moral. It was sanctimoniously stated that a widowed

woman cannot be purified by hundred baths. She too should die along with her husband, or she has to end her life otherwise. The prohibitions prescribed for her are beyond our imagination of this time. Some widows affirm that it is thousand times better to burn oneself to death rather than suffer the agonies and sorrows of widowhood.

In this land of ours abounding in devoted women noted for serving and dying for their husbands many religions arose; there are also many prophets. Many religious reform movements have had their birth here. In the important matters of exploitation and subordination of women, and discrimination against women they did not take any initiative nor did they undertake to change them. The believers in all religions look at woman as an instrument to contribute to the pleasure and happiness of man. All religions have opposed either directly or indirectly the concept of equality between the sexes in the domestic sphere, as well as in the sector of morality. In one breath, the religious pronouncements run thus: "All men and women are equal before God." Do we come across any woman officiating either as a priest or a person leading the prayers, whether it be in the temple, mosque, church or synagogue? "(written in 1985)". No. She is not fit for that job. She is there to serve only. That is why she is debarred from playing a significant role in places of worship.

Religious culture can only view women either as goddesses or slaves; it cannot look at them as human individuals. But there is a contradiction here. When proclaiming that men adore women as goddesses, it has become a habit to treat them as slaves. Double standard of morality reigns supreme in the customs, traditions and culture. Religious people have brainwashed the minds of women so that their views and decisions are in conformity with the views of men; this process has gone on from their very childhood. That is exactly why even those women who have had the benefit of modern education do not dare to think or act contrary to the old tradition. They will treat such thought and act as tantamount to either rebellion or revolution. They are always under the apprehension that they will be born as either insects or low creatures in the next birth if they protest or rebel.

Our society has become a victim to the aggrandisement of religion. The woman has been relegated to the second place, oppressed by society and religion and dominated by man.

In the view of religion, society is man's world. Woman does not count. She has been treated as a parasite. Marriage and

maternity have made her position deplorable. Though the Constitution of India assures political democracy, the woman has been pushed out from the arena of politics thanks to the prevailing social and economic inequality. Thus, the ideas of inequality, differentiation, and male superiority do not allow the woman to participate in modern life actively. In essence, our unscientific outlook prevents us from proceeding on the path of progress.

Even though they take to jobs women do not enjoy freedom. You do not find happiness in their faces. The reason is simple. It is either her father, brothers or husband who have rights of control and appropriation over her earnings. She is nowhere in the picture. The social and cultural life of the woman has become a tragedy. She is compelled to purchase her husband with money. Thus, marriage is not a union of minds, not of affections, and not of individuals; it can be safely affirmed that marriage is between two families, same castes and two layers of status. Neither any religion nor any code of law and morality, from the Vedas to Manu and even thereafter has considered the woman an individual. Even though some importance has been accorded to humanity in ancient Hindu culture, a lot of prominence and significance is still given to fear, devotion, service, Godhood and religion. Our tradition has equated service and devotion to husband as equivalent to a higher and nobler life in the world of gods. That is why women worship their husbands as "living gods"; they sing their praise and beg for favours. In return, they receive nothing but humiliation by way of kicks and beatings from their husbands.

A human being is born free. That is to say, the individual has the right to a life of freedom. But the woman's freedom is negated in the name of religion, honour, family welfare and social prestige. The cruelty in this situation is that she has to give up her freedom willingly. Even if she resorts to suicide, even at the time of death, as a culmination of her effort to get liberation from the sadistic behaviour of her husband, she states that she herself is responsible for her death. There are many cases when women, murdered by their husbands gave dying declarations that they had committed suicide! To what deplorable state have the women been reduced, thanks to the indoctrination of religion.

Neither any man opposes nor any religion objects to the exploitation of the woman's body in pornography, advertisements and cheap media. What happens to her sacredness, and the great culture of ours? Religion speaks with two voices; it lays down two standards

of morality. It modifies all traditions, customs and cultures to suit its convenience, credit and gain.

Social etiquette has been formulated with regard to women's dress, conduct, manners and even adornment. A woman's actions and activities are circumscribed by certain restrictions and prohibitions. If any woman does any outstanding act, or exhibits extraordinary intelligence she is credited with "superhuman powers". There were times in other climes and regions when brave and intelligent women were burnt at stakes by being branded witches. Are there no women who are more endowed than men with talent, courage and spirit of adventure? Valentina and Tereskova, the space women, Madam Curie, the discoverer of radium, Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt are some such women. Coming nearer home we have the shining example of Sarojini naidu, Durgabai Deshmukh, Indira Gandhi. It is proved beyond doubt that women do not lag behind in any walk of life.

Religion has condemned women to slavery from birth onwards. Society has restricted the development of her personality. Man has suppressed her talents. It is a pity that we have not realised that it is not woman alone but entire humanity that will suffer on account of oppression of women. This is not only because of our stupidity, it is also the result of religion.

It is said that the Negroes painted their tales of woe and slavery in pictures. Likewise, women have been struggling to bring home to the people stories of their agonies and sufferings. As a result, some women are coming forward to undertake the task of liberating themselves.

The question about the way in which women steeped in ignorance and superstition arising out of religion can be liberated has to be faced squarely. To imagine that the condition of women can be changed solely through law and legislation is to live in a fool's paradise. Dowry cannot be wished away by law. After all, legislation is only an instrument. No doubt it instills fear in the minds of the guilty; it protects the innocent. But, till the women get rid of their mental slavery, till they regain their self-confidence, till they get over fear of god and overcome superstition, till a scientific view is cultivated, there won't be anybody to liberate them. Women have to cultivate a rational outlook, to ascend the heights of knowledge and will. Protracted and continuous struggle on the part of women is the need of the hour. Then, and only then can the Indian people come out of the vicious fangs of 'our culture'.

## WOMEN : TRADITION AND CULTURE

We delineate a person's culture by assessing his conduct, learning, talents, artistic excellence, and skill and capacity. Likewise we determine a society's culture by the qualities of modesty, discretion, tradition, character and genius of the individuals in that society. Hence, it is but proper to describe the situation of the Indian woman on the basis of her position and status in the Indian culture keeping these values in mind. It is talked about that a man's culture and a woman's culture are different, being dependent on their customs and practices. The inability to see that just as there cannot be any differentiation in terms of genes and blood between men and women, there cannot be any difference in culture is the cause for this confusing situation. This is the speciality of Indian culture. In fact, the definition of culture is distinct from the definition of civilisation. It is a pity that the meaning of culture has become insignificant on account of the attitude of persons ignorant of the differences between civilisation and culture. Our dress, style, or tools determine our civilisation. At one time we travelled in bullock-carts. Today we move about in motor cars and aeroplanes. Long long ago, men and women used leaves and skins to cover their bodies. Today, we use fine cloth. We are utilising gas and electricity, and electronic equipment for our comfort. Thanks to the advance of science, our civilisation is progressing. The change is appreciable. But culture comprises attitudes and emotions, customs and human values. That the culture has not changed in a fundamental manner is not a statement that is far from truth. The status of the present-day woman has undergone some change in respect of her club life, dress and style, and education and employment. In the past the woman was a slave. Nowadays she has been reduced to the situation of a doll in a showcase. That may be considered as the result of the influence of civilisation on her. To sing the song of adoration of the past, and to proclaim flamboyantly that old is gold is the only culture we have.

Our culture has been a prisoner, bound hand and foot by religion. Our women are the frogs in the well, constricted in their conduct by tradition. A review of the past and the present is necessary to find out the causes of this situation. The Vedas,

Upanishads, epics and the Smrithis constitute the foundation of Aryan culture. These have been the determining factors all along upto this day. A woman's life has been moulded for ages by their influence. Let us examine them.

Hindus have been propagating that the Vedas were not written by man but were pronounced by Brahma, the Creator-god. These theists have attributed divinity to them. The argument that the position of woman in the Vedic society (2200-1200 B.C.) was very high and noble and that it has to be restored is very strong. In reality a woman's role has been described differently at different places in the Vedas. What is said in Yajur Veda differs from what is said in Rig Veda. It is likewise varying in Sama Veda and Atharva VEda. There are discrepancies in the same text. Differences abound between chapter and chapter, and verse and verses; they confuse. Scholars like Alteker, Kapadia and Indira have maintained that there is not much differentiation between man and woman. Still, we find from the verses in the Rig Veda that men and women are given a higher and lower status respectively. It is said that a woman has a role to play in ceremonies and sacrifices and that both men and women are equal in the eyes of religion; it is stated at another place in the same Rig Veda that a son is needed for escaping hell. "Oh God! protect my son who is to be born. Let my offspring be man and no woman." (Atharva Veda 2-3-23).

"Oh! God! you have given me progeny, Give me a son, woman can be born elsewhere, but give me only a boy." A woman's defeat begins even when she is conceived. The mother who pines for a son becomes disheartened at seeing the birth of a girl. She begs for pardon from the family members as if she has committed a crime. That there are no accounts of festivities in the VEdas at the time of a girl's birth is common knowledge. Even now that is the practice obtaining.

It is written in the Satapatha Brahmana that a woman without a son is an unfortunate being. That shows that her life is vitally linked with a desire for a son. In fact her family life is intertwined with the anguish for a son. In Atharva Veda it is affirmed that marriage is meant for offspring only and that too a boy. The description of the woman's character in the VEdas is cruel and heinous. An exhortation is made to man that he should run away from the friendship of woman as a woman is cruel like the wolf (Rig Veda 6-5-82). The statements that dogs, crows, Shudras and women belong to the same class, that sinfulness, deceit and ignorance are

naturally inherent in women and hence they should be kept away are meaningful. It is stated in a verse in Rig Veda (8-3-77) that a woman is bereft of intelligence and is unfit for education. The conduct of unmarried daughters was suspect in those days and there is evidence of anxiety of parents on account of suffering brought upon them by daughters.

In Atharva Veda, a woman is described as property. The idea 'Oh Ye Men! Sow your seeds in the fertile field i.e., woman!' was prevalent in the Vedic mantras. This is referred to in Atreya Purana as related by Narada to Harishchandra. This conclusively proves that the seeds for the fall of the woman were sown at the time of the Vedas, that is, even before Manu.

"Manu Smrithi (200 B.C.) prescribes duties and obligations for a woman from childhood to death. According to it, she should be a perpetual minor, to be under the guardianship of some one or the other. The attitude she has to display, and her conduct towards her husband have been laid down in extenso in the Smrithi. They run thus: Even if the husband is immoral, a debauch, and lacks good qualities the wife must still worship him as if he were god himself. (Manu 5-154). It is the bounden duty of women to obey and follow the dictates of their husbands (Yajnavalkya 1-18). A woman need not perform any Yagna or ceremony or undertake and fast for her salvation. She will attain better life by service to her husband only. (Manu 5-145). The woman who fasts and performs 'Vratas' during her husband's life time contributes to the lengthening of her husband's life. The woman who drinks the water with which she has washed her husband's body and feet at sacred springs, rivers and seas will inherit best life (Atri 136-137).

There is no other world to the wife save that of her husband. The wife who has done harm to her husband cannot go to her husband's lok (place of residence in heaven) after his death. Therefore, women should never cause discontent to their husbands (Vasishta 21-24).

The King should punish the woman who takes pride in her parental family and thereby shows disobedience towards her husband, by throwing her to the dogs to be torn to pieces before the multitude of the people (Manu 8-871).

Nobody should partake of the food offered by a woman who disobeys her husband. She is to be treated as a debauchee (Angirasa 69).

Any wife who rejects and disregards her husband when he is immoral, or a drunkard or an infirm person shall be excommunicated for three months by being denied costly clothes and jewells (Manu 10-8).

Such other statements are in abundance in Manu Smrithi. A woman without an attitude of peace and tolerance will be reborn as a wolf. Both husband and wife must never dine together. The husband shall not see her when she is adorning herself. Likewise he must not see her in her confinement. She must not be seen naked or half naked.

The wife shall not take money from her husband's earnings nor from his joint family.

"Saptapadi" (Taking of seven steps in marriage) is to happen only once in a woman's life. Therefore, she shall never remarry.

She is fit for 'Niyoga' (intercourse with husband's near relatives for the purpose of begetting children) so as to keep up the line of her husband. It has to be only with the husband's relatives or his caste men.

The body of the male selected for Niyoga other than the generative organ shall be anointed with oil and ghee. Other parts of the body shall not be touched by the woman. The mother has to maintain the son by undertaking, if necessary, mean deeds. But if the mother commits a misdeed the son can punish her.

The woman shall not sleep during daytime. She shall not mingle with men.

The women have to keep a smiling countenance even if they are suffering inwardly.

The wife has to perform all kinds of 'vratas' and ceremonies and pray for the long life of her husband. Only such women shall be called queens of the household and comrades. The man is entitled to marry if the wife cannot beget him a son. The woman who has sexual intercourse with a Shudra shall be thrown to dogs and killed. Even the king shall not save her.

These are several statements which equate a woman with a Shudra. Divine water (water used during worship) shall be given to man thrice. It shall be given only once to a woman and Shudra. No penance is necessary if a woman or a Shudra is killed.

The caste system was so rigid that punishment for its transgression was severe.

If a Shudra rapes a Brahmin woman his private parts shall be cut off. Offspring born of a Shudra male and a Brahmin female belong to the lowest caste i.e., the fifth caste. How the woman was treated as property and claimed as such is evident by the following statements.

A woman who flees from home can be claimed and accepted.

A woman who runs away is not unwelcome at home.

Thus the Brahmins and Kshatriyas combined together suppress and oppress the women and Shudras.

Though Manu advocated 'Niyoga', he recommended it as an exception to the rule. The woman is to remain loyal to her husband's bed even after her husband's death. Yet a sonless widow is bound to go through 'Niyoga' to beget a son for her husband. He took several precautions, no doubt so that the practice might not be abused. He stipulated that the concerned woman should treat the concerned man as a 'Guru' and the man should treat the woman a 'mother'. Yet, one can safely surmise that man derived inspiration for this rule from the Rig Veda itself. It is stated in verse 10-35-45 of Rig Veda that a woman can even have sexual intercourse with men for the purpose of begetting progeny. The verse 10-18-8 called upon a widow not to grieve over her husband's death but become another's wife.

The idea throughout was that a woman cannot have a personality of her own but must belong to somebody, as if she was mere property.

There is a widely prevalent misconception that the woman's position was very high during the Vedic period, that there was no 'Sati' and that it came into vogue only during the Puranic period. Verse No.18-3-1 of Atharva Veda belies this view. The meaning is clear. The woman who burns herself on the funeral pyre of her husband reaches her husband. All comforts shall be hers. What she has done is the best course of action.

During the Vedic period sexual relations between brothers and sisters were not uncommon (Rig Veda 10-61-7), (Atharva Veda 20-96-15).

There are authorities to show that slavery had its inception during the period of the Rig Veda. Men were killed in war; their

women were captured and sexually used. Such women were even given away as presents to officers and Kings. Some women were kept as common women. There is mention of prostitutes in Taittiriya Brahmana, Yajur Veda and other texts.

It is a gross misconception to hold that the Vedic culture is sacred and that woman enjoyed a higher and nobler position then. Not many women can be found among the Rishis (sages) who composed the Vedic verses. The Vedic period extended over hundrededs of years. Relatively the Rigvedic period was better from the viewpoint of a woman's status. Still there was discrimination between sons and daughters. The woman's position began declining during the Yajur Vedic period and reached its nadir by the age of Sama Veda. The degradation became complete by the time of the Atharva Veda. By the time of the Brahmanas (600 B.C.), girls were being gifted away or sold for a consideration. During the pre-Upanishadic period the woman had to live only for her husband's sake. Abuses and beatings became the lot of women even during the days of the Chandogyopanishad and the Brihadaranyakopanishad.

By the time of the Sutra Period (200 B.C. to 200 A.D.), the woman lost all her religious rights, right to education and became her husband's property only to beget children for him. Codification of the Dharma Shastra went on from 100 A.D. Many a Smriti Karta flourished. Manu, Yagnavalkya, Visnu, Parasara are some of the codifiers. Apastamba, Senkha and other are the other law givers. All of them have accorded woman an inferior status.

Out of all, the laws of Manu have influenced women to a great extent. Manu ordained that a woman should not enjoy freedom for she would abuse it. As per his laws women are to be kept under surveillance lest they become immoral. As it is impossible to keep women under subjection by compulsion, he counselled men to treat the women with consideration by giving them sarees, ornaments, presents etc., so that women may imbibe the men's values. Thus Manu has fashioned the chains that bind women. Taking the cue from Manu, men have adopted those ways and cruelly exploited women through the ages.

Till the statute law came into force, the ideas of the 'Sages' like Manu and others ruled Hindu society. Though some progressive legislation for the benefit of women, has come into existence oflate, it is deplorable that women are not yet ready to take advantage of these laws to escape the double morality of the decadent society and to breathe the spirit of freedom.

## EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND MARRIAGE : WHICH IS SIGNIFICANT ?

To give an answer to this question, one need not ponder much; nor does it involve much labour and strain. The problem is solved to a great extent if the woman's individuality is accepted as a fact. In a democratic society, men and women are expected to enjoy equal status and have equal opportunities. In that case, to prescribe marriage as the first duty for a woman is to err on the wrong side. Only that society which gives scope and opportunities for development and efflorescence of the personality of each of its members can flourish well. When the innate talents of an individual find expression, when they grow in accordance with his or her personality and contribute to the well-being of the society, it is said that the person's individuality is unfolding. For this process to take place, education is a must. Knowledge, scientific outlook and a humanistic view will arise in a person due to education. Even insects, birds and animals learn from experience to some extent. Hence, there should be no wonder that a human being, the highest of the living, is able to draw lessons from experience with the aid of reason. The human being also has certain privileges and faculties that are denied to animals. He has language, tools and instruments. Therefore, he is able to know experience of others. Thus, his knowledge envelops the entire human race. He receives the essence of experience of the other human beings through pictures, books, cinemas, radio, television, dance and drama. To have the capacity to get and understand this experience education is absolutely necessary. It is common knowledge that an educated person has a greater capacity to acquire knowledge than an uneducated person.

Even those who concede that education is necessary for each citizen entertain primitive ideas when it comes to women's education. Poor Men ! It is not their fault. It arises out of their upbringing in an atmosphere steeped in orthodoxy and superstition. For generation, it has been dinned into their ears that a woman is weak, hence she needs protection and therefore she should obey others. We all know that Manu, the law giver, has ordained that a woman is not entitled to freedom and independence and that she shall be

protected by her father in childhood, by her husband in her youth and by her male children in old age. In reality our country is the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from the cultural point of view ideas of men and women have not undergone a significant transformation. Whatever change is obtaining is not of a fundamental character.

Though the woman has taken to space travel, pilots aeroplanes works hard in the fields of scientific research on par with man, has established her talents and capacities in the administration of her matters, society, and State, man has still not ceased to entertain the desire to take advantage of her services as a cook, a mother of his children, as a lover and, lastly, as his servant by giving her the grand appellation of "Queen of the household." That is exactly why he argues that marriage is more significant to her than education. Selfishness is inherent in this proposition. Just as a factory owner prefers a skilled workman, man longs for an educated wife. He does not want a working woman as a wife. To be more precise, he does not like his wife to be engaged in gainful employment. This is the general attitude of young men of today. The youth has been told that it is the privilege of men to work. The girl is dissuaded from pursuing an educational career. Not being content with that, her education is stopped with the argument that it is not needed as she is not going to take up employment or to look after the affairs of society. In these very words it has been made amply clear that she should not become employed, and that she should not participate in civic affairs. Many persons entertain the view that employment is only meant for earning a living. If we go to the root of the matter, its hollowness will be apparent. It is certainly true that employment brings in earnings. But there are other benefits also. There is a lot of difference between the employed and the unemployed in respect of their mental make-up. An unemployed person suffers because he is denied an opportunity to exhibit his talent; his knowledge appears useless and insignificant, and he sees no scope for the development of his or her personality. Thus, he vegetates. Insignificance and incapacity run throughout his life. As aptly portrayed by the famous Telugu short-story writer and novelist Gopichand in his novel, *Life of an Incompetent Person*, he cannot even display emotions like anger and annoyance against his own kith and kin. He leads a life that is neither of benefit to himself nor others. When this is the fate of men who have many rights in this society, the condition of unemployed women who have been subjected to mental slavery for generations, who stifle their person-

alities in the name of goodness, and live for others in the name of 'devotion to husband' is beyond description.

Every woman with a streak of individuality suffers from the painful feeling that she is forced to depend on others in her life. That employment is absolutely necessary for a woman is beyond question if she is to lead a decent and significant life.

Some people raise a plausible argument thus. Even if the woman desires to take up employment, where are the jobs? If the woman waits till she gets employment, she may not be married at all. In that event, she may have to lead the life of an old maid. Why do you inflict that punishment on her in the name of individuality? No doubt it is true that it may be difficult for all educated women to get jobs. There is a difference between the statements that women shall never seek employment, and that it is very difficult to find jobs for all women. It is a difference in attitude and stance. First of all, it must be accepted that it is good for woman to be employed. Then men and women together may strive for a society guaranteeing employment to women. To present an argument that a woman should not seek employment as she is not likely to get a job is to look down upon women.

Another plea is advanced nowadays. If all the women get employment, there is likelihood of unemployment spreading among men. The answer is simple. Let us all work for a society guaranteeing full employment. In the transition period, some persons may have to remain unemployed. It may be men. Why not? What is the rationale in the argument that only women shall constitute the unemployed? If a just and equal society comes into existence, unemployment will disappear. If at all there are unemployed at any time, they may be men or women. An employed woman may maintain her husband. Of course nobody desires this state of affairs just as women do not like to be maintained by men. But if at all that situation becomes inevitable, the men should not feel that their male superiority has been eroded. It is time such meaningless and absurd pleas and arguments are given up.

There are several men and women in our society who instil fear in the minds of people on the following counts: That an unmarried woman will be looked down upon; that her situation will cause harm to her; that she will surrender her self to immorality, and so on. When it is understood that morality is equally applicable and necessary for both men and women, these misconceptions arising out of fear and suspicion will disappear from the scene altogether.

The present-day young men repeat ad nauseam that marriage is the bounden duty of women. At the same time, these arrogant chauvinistic young men demand dowry as of right and pitch their dowry rates high. And the orthodox backward people, both men and women, support them. To meet their challenge it is imperative that women should get themselves educated, take up jobs and also take a vow that they will marry only such men who can treat them as equals. If they do not come across such men, the women have to come to the firm resolve that there is no great danger or harm if they were to remain as old maids rather than to wallow in misery and slavery by submerging their individuality. Then, and then only will man come down from the high pedestal on which he has placed himself, and begin to respect women. A society and family assuring independence and freedom to women will come into existence. In order to usher in such a situation, every young woman may have to seek education, acquire knowledge and discretion and attain a state of selfreliance on the basis of her talents and capacities. Only in such a situation she can and should aspire she for marriage.

## MARRIAGE: FORM AND NATURE

In these times when women are proclaiming that they want liberation but not protection, even forms of marriage are undergoing change. Marriage is an important event in human life. It is sweet and noble and represents a permanent bond. It creates scope for an experience defying description and definition. It starts the great journey of life when two individuals with different temperaments and identities undertake to tread the same path together. From that very moment they desire and cherish to move and act in unison. Marriage presents a new life to the man and wife in all climes and countries, whether it be in the east or west; it assumes very great importance in the lives of the parties to the marriage. It makes the two into one and that is its peculiarity. Not only does it herald the rise of love and affection but it begins a life of responsibility and resolute striving. They become one unit enthused by a spirit of duty and act with perseverance of a very high order in the process of fulfilling that task. The incident of marriage moulds the lives of the partners into abodes of peace and 'Dharma'. Marriage is that social system wherein liberty and equality flourishes and ought to coexist. Anybody can build a house but as soon as the married couple enter the same it is transformed into a home, said Ruskin. The following questions arise for consideration: How can such a married life be made pleasant and happy? What is it that differentiates the traditional orthodox marriage from the modern marriage. Should all past be obliterated? Is all that is old worthless and useless? What are the particular features of reformatory marriage, ideal marriage and revolutionary marriage? At present the debate and discussion revolve round these topics. Hence arises the need to ponder over them.

### Hindu Marriage

'Kanyadanam' (bride's father giving her away to the bridegroom). 'Panigrahanam' (Bridegroom taking the bride's hand into his and promising her protection), and 'Saptapadi' (bridegroom taking seven steps with himself in the lead) happen to be the cardinal features of an orthodox Hindu Marriage. The seven steps mentioned above are symbolic of the journey of life. The bridegroom calls upon the bride to take one step each for food, strength, wealth, friendship,

sex, offspring and happiness. The modern generation do not set much store by this form of marriage. There are many reasons for this attitude: That men of one and only one caste say, Brahims, should be entitled to officiate as priests at marriages, that the marriage ceremony should be conducted in the Sanskrit language making it difficult for the parties to appreciate or understand the rituals, that the proprietary rights of the father over the bride should be transferred in the name of 'Kanyadan' and that the 'Saptapadi Mantra' (Seven Steps formula) be recited in terms of an appeal to the Hindu God Vishnu are the objectionable features. This form of marriage smacks of religiosity through and through. This orthodox marriage kills the individual volition; it debases the individuality. It strikes at human progress. It is backward looking and reactionary. These orthodox marriages cannot be ideal marriages in these days of social change and scientific advancement.

### **Muslim Marriage**

As per the provisions of Muslim Law, a Mohammedan man is entitled to marry a Muslim or Christian woman; he cannot contract a marriage with a woman of any other religion. The Muslim marriage is based on agreement and it ripens into a contract. The bride is asked to signify her assent or dissent to a proposal that the bridegroom offers to marry her with *Mahr* at a certain amount. A Muslim male, called "Wali", usually her uncle or brother acts on her behalf. The Wali asks for her consent before two witness. Either she consents or her silence is considered as her consent. This is reported to the 'Naib', the officiating priest. The witnesses nod their approval. The bridegroom and the 'Wali' on behalf of the bride sign in the 'Nikah' register. When these formalities are complied with the marriage is treated as completed. Neither the bride nor the bridegroom is allowed to see the other before the marriage due to the presence of the 'Purdah' system. As the system of Muslim marriage is one-sided and favours male domination it is injurious to the interests of the women. A Muslim wife is denied many rights. She cannot be the guardian of her own children. She is to lead her life according to the dictates of the husband. The deplorable condition of Muslim women does not command the approval of sensible and intelligent men and women.

### **Christian Marriage**

The Christian marriage is performed in the church. This takes place before God under the auspices of the priest. The bride takes

laws to regulate the affairs of Christians, say from succession to divorce. These laws run contrary to the interests of women. The marriage ceremony of Christians, including the vows offend the principles of freedom and equality. Divorce under special circumstances is permitted. The Indian Divorce Act of 1869 regulates the procedure for divorce. It granted the right of divorce for the first time to Christians. The conditions imposed for grant of divorce to women are more stringent than in the case of men. A woman cannot get divorce as easily as a man. The modern women look at this discrimination as an insult to them.

#### **Marriage under the Special Marriage Act 1954.**

This marriage is popularly called 'Registered Marriage' as registration under the Hindu Marriage Act came into vogue only in 1955. Under this Act, the bride and bridegroom should have completed 18 and 21 years of age respectively. If the marriage is to be registered after it is gone through in any form then the age prescribed for the bride and bridegroom is 21 years. This Act enables men and women of different castes, religions, tribes, languages, and countries to marry. Thirty days notice of registration is to be given. The parties to the marriage are to take the vows before the Registrar in the presence of three adult witnesses. Then they sign in the register; the witnesses append their signatures to the document. Succession to the properties of the spouses is regulated by the provisions of the Indian Succession Act. The law regarding divorce is adumbrated in the Special Marriage Act itself. The condition that 30 days notice of marriage is to be given, the absence of provision for unilateral divorce and defects in the Law of succession are some of the handicaps. Still, this form of marriage is better than religious marriages to a great extent.

#### **Reformative Marriages**

In these marriages we do find some change in any one, some or all of the aspects regarding the marriage ceremony, i.e., conditions of marriage, marriage vows and the persons who officiate at the marriage. If the marriage is performed in a regional language it falls under the purview of this kind of marriage. If a Muslim woman contracts with the bridegroom claiming right of divorce and guardianship of her children the marriage falls in this category. Uptill now, Brahmin priests have been officiating at Hindu marriages. If the person administering the marriage vows is selected without reference to caste or sex, or if the parties take the seven steps side by side, or if the old traditional customs are modified to suit the modern times,

or if the significance of marriage is brought home to the parties and the guests in an intelligible manner then the Hindu marriage procedures may be said to be reformed to some extent.

### Ideal Marriage

The peculiar nature of this marriage needs some clarification. 'Kanyadanam' (giving away the bride) does not find a place herein. The very basis of this marriage is coming together of two individuals. The parties to the marriages allow themselves free expression of their ideas. The choice is theirs. The exchange of garlands symbolises the act of selection. The marriage vows will be in a language understood by both of them. The bride usually takes the vow thus: "In pleasure or pain, in plenty or in poverty I will be helpful to you and act as your colleague, comrade, love and wife". The bridegroom takes a similar vow with a slight modification in respect of a word. Caste and religion do not figure in this marriage. Neither God is invoked nor hymns are recited. The 'tali' (the sacred thread) is not tied round the neck of the bride. There is no emphasis on auspicious day or week or time. These marriages are performed at a time and place convenient to both parties. Astrology does not play any part here. There is no scope for wrangling regarding dowry and customary presents. The expenditure does not go up on account of feast and festivities. Ostentation is given the go by. Superstition is not allowed to reign supreme as in the old times. The relatives, friends and parents of both parties offer their wholehearted co-operation. Even women can officiate at such marriages. The parties do not take a vow to remain united till the end of their lives. Garlands are exchanged by the bride and bridegroom at the request of the officiating lady. She supervises the procedure relating to the marriage. She advises the couple to treat one another with love, affection, regard and respect and to lead a life of companionship based on mutual dialogue unhampered by the presence of others, however near and dear they may be.

In one view of the matter these Ideal Marriages need not be gone through under anybody's auspices. The parties can themselves take the vows. But as marriage is considered also as a social institution, the vows are uttered before elders or others. No doubt marriage involves essentially the lives of two individuals but it needs recognition of the society as problems of children, property etc., do arise. That is exactly why both the bride and the bridegroom express their sentiments and views before others. This kind of marriage opposes the intrusion of religion and the ceremonies ordained by

it. Marriage before a magistrate or an official is not to the liking of the modern youth. They do not wish to make promises that they may not be able to keep. For instance, they do not propose life-long fidelity by oath. They usually select either a seashore or a mountain slope i.e., a place which stresses the significance of relationship between man and nature, as the marriage forum.

### **Revolutionary Marriage**

This category of marriage is quite different from both Reformatory Marriage and Ideal Marriage. There is neither any ceremony here nor any need for the presence of elders. There is no forum for marriage. No vows are taken. The lovers simply agree to live together. They are not man and wife in the traditional sense. The woman is not a person to be protected and maintained as a traditional wife. The man does not take upon himself the 'glorious' role of protector and provider of the woman as a traditional husband. One does not have any rights or duties towards the other. Mutual love and affection, regard and respect, perfect understanding and sensitivity based on sympathy in the real sense of the term happen to be the cementing factors for that union. In fact such a cohabitation is possible only in the case of mature individuals. It is not within the reach of the common run of human beings. This is the appropriate relationship between two highly cultured individuals. At present this is an ideal for ordinary men and women. Such a union gives greater importance to the fundamental aspect of the institution of marriage. It pays homage to intellectual freedom and true love. When the parties to the union find that the fountain of love has dried up they simply separate without much fuss and ado and even social disapproval. They take up separate residence. They do not need either courts or the intervention of elders to facilitate that separation. No other easier method for separation exists anywhere in human society. Some thinkers object to such a union being termed as marriage. But, in fact, such objection does not stand. The form and nature of the marriage ceremony depend upon the clime, country and time. Revolutionary changes do take place even in the sphere of the institution of marriage. We cannot prevent nor forestall change. Transformation or change is inevitable. Even now in some countries men choose to marry unwed mothers; yet there are certain nations where virgins alone are preferred. In other communities widow marriage is not a taboo while in some others they are frowned upon. In certain tribes, a ritual of a man and woman hiding under a blanket is treated as marriage whereas in others tying of the Tali assumes great significance. Bride-price is prevalent in certain societies, while

dowry is traditional in some others. Continued cohabitation is treated as marriage in some others. Continued cohabitation is treated as marriage in some societies. Therefore, it is not necessary to go through any ceremony whatsoever. No other evidence is necessary than living together as lovers. If still there is persistent demand for ceremony, then the very fact of cohabitation can be termed as the requisite ceremony. Hindu law accepts a man and woman as husband and wife in the case of continuous cohabitation and declaration of the children by the man as his own children. The only condition is that the alliance shall not come within the prohibited degrees i.e., if a woman and her maternal aunt's son live together in a home for years together, even then they cannot be treated according to law as wife and husband. Likewise, Muslim personal law allows a presumption of man and woman being husband and wife in the case of continuous cohabitation coupled with the declaration of the man that the woman is his wife. But the presumption is rebuttable and can be disproved. So also Sec. 114 of the Evidence Act permits a presumption in similar circumstances. But there must be no impediments for the marriage according to their personal law. The restrictions and constrictions present in a religious marriage are absent in a Revolutionary Marriage. Be it noted that this type of marriage is not yet recognised by the law of the land.

There are certain special features common to Ideal Marriage and Revolutionary Marriage. The relationship between the couple has certain particular and peculiar characteristics. Both enter into the arena of progress and cosmopolitanism as mature and self-sufficient individuals. Both will contribute collectively to the growth of their personalities with love and affection. One does not use or exploit the other for selfish ends. Each strives for the welfare and progress of the other. One does not demand obedience from the other. In these marriages sexual intimacy is not based on compulsion. It is mingled with mutual experience of joy and exuberance of spirit and enriches the minds and hearts of both. Marriage herein scorns inequality of relationship between the parties. Convenience and comfort, pleasure and happiness are involved in such a companionship. It is not an institution created for the joy and pleasure of the man only. Neither is it meant for the protection and security of the wife. Of late there have been changes in the concepts of love and sex. Sex is being considered even from the standpoint of women. Love ceases to be considered only as a woman pandering to the whims and fancies, pleasures and comfort of the man. Even husband is called upon to shower love and affection towards the wife. It

is not tantamount to the sympathy, care and affection bestowed upon pets and domestic animals. The love to be exhibited towards a wife is a sweet sentiment based on due regard and respect for her personality. Such sentiment can only flourish and flower in Ideal and Revolutionary marriages. One point cannot be emphasised too much. Revolutionary marriage may not serve the interests of all. It may not be suitable to all. Only mature individuals, free human beings and persons imbibing human values can practise it whereas Ideal marriage is within the reach of all. It is possible for all to make it a reality in their lives. It harmonises human value and disparities in human society. It is the bounden duty of all wise and large-hearted persons to propagate the utility and worth of Ideal Marriage, and encourage youth to take to it with enthusiasm and zeal.

## MARRIED LIFE: FRIENDSHIP AND HARMONY

Marriage is a social institution wherein two individuals have to live together. There cannot be any inequality in this area. The partners depend upon each other in the same manner as the arrow and the bow. If one of the partners dominates the other, it will not serve any purpose. If two persons with their distinct personalities wish to lead a collective life based on love, each of them must understand the other. Only when they traverse the path of love will a happy married life become possible. Marriage is not the ultimate end of the struggle of life. It begins the journey of life. Therefore, each individual must have the necessary knowledge, courage and determination to face the waves of the sea of marriage.

Married life is a combination of pleasure and pain. If an individual succumbs to a sense of fear when faced with problems and if he becomes disheartened when confronted with difficulties he is reduced to the position of a coward. Pleasure and pain are inherent in this kind of bond. But only intelligent and discerning persons have the patience and skill to treat the family bonds as their means of happiness. To the ignorant, these bonds bring misery and unhappiness as they bind them hard. Therefore, one has to come to the conclusion that it is only the wife and husband who are capable of making their married life happy.

It is sheer stupidity to think that married life can be a sojourn in Paradise from the very moment of marriage. Both the partners have to use all the talents to make it a success. Sacrifices have to be made. Each has to understand the mental make-up of the other. Tolerance, patience, capacity to adjust, and a spirit of harmony are essential. At first, they must have a clear appreciation of their own circumstances. If such wisdom is to arise, they must seek the knowledge of the world. Whatever happens before marriage, whatever is imagined before that event, is only a dream. Everything looks rosy and pleasant in that flight of fancy. After marriage that dream vanishes; responsibilities hover round the couple. Till that moment both are led by others. After marriage there is no question

of anybody helping them to walk along the path of life. Both have to walk together. This means that mutual understanding is the sine qua non of married life. If that bent of mind is cultivated, there is no danger of antipathy between them. Broken hearts cannot be brought together. For people without any fissures and tensions, it is all milk and honey. The capacity to transform whatever is available into an object of beauty, and experience the pleasure thereof must be there in both the parties to the marriage. Otherwise, there cannot be any progress; life then becomes a vacuum.

The partners have some moral responsibilities towards each other. No doubt there are some goals of life to be reached together in a spirit of friendship. We do come across good and bad men in the world. Goodness is inherent in all individuals. The goodness of a life partner will be manifest if it is encouraged by the other. For that, a lot of patience, wisdom and self-sacrifice are needed. If one desires wholeheartedly the welfare of the other, the other person also will respond similarly. There must be a spirit of give and take between the wife and husband. It is best to avoid abusive language towards the beloved; it is also necessary. The uncivilised will bend his head in shame before a civilised person. Even if one wishes to tender advice to the beloved, and even if the advice is unpleasant to others, the manner of tendering it must be pleasant. Loving each other and being in love are not the same. Being in love is a condition of life, whereas loving is an act in life. That is the very essence of love. Sympathy towards the other should not remain only as a mental attitude; it must inform the daily life of both. Love unites the two hearts of the lovers. That sort of real love is manifest only among the married parties. If there is intellectual capacity on the part of one to treat the other life partner on a par with oneself, then the cup of family life will be full with mutual love and affection. One has to understand the meaning and significance of the other's actions. Bereft of such an effort, life will become useless and insignificant.

To live as good friends should be the aim and object of married partners. Sometimes sacrifice may be the touchstone of friendship. In that event, one does not feel that an act of sacrifice is being done. For an abiding friendship outward expression is unnecessary. It just expresses itself in action. There is a saying that a friend impels one to weep and an enemy provokes one to laughter. To tell bitter truths to the beloved cannot be avoided. A relationship between two different individuals cannot lead to the elimination of their distinct

personalities. On the other hand, it can contribute to the growth of their individualities. A friendship between wife and husband must be such that the people around should be proud of them. It is said that love is born at first sight. This is not true. What arises is not love but attraction or infatuation. That is our daily experience. Temporary attraction cannot be termed as love. Infatuation and love are different. A person may be attracted towards another by the manner of his talk and walk, sense of humour and physical beauty. If all that attraction is to be considered as love, a person is likely to be subjected to shock and suffering in life. Love brings two persons closer to one another. Mutual respect, affection, tolerance, spirit of adjustment and sacrifice, and inclination to strive for satisfaction of the other's needs are features of love. It demands closeness between man and woman. That is natural. Sex enters into the relationship of those who have already become closer. With that, love flowers, fructifies and ultimately leads to satisfaction and happiness. Love is not appropriation of the other. To discover the humanity of the other is the essence of love. Love based on mere attraction arising out of a smile, a pleasant conversation or pleasing looks or nice conduct is not real love. If this attraction is to change with circumstances, then it is not love. This affection or attraction is bound to fade if there is a change in the circumstances. Real love is not subject to the vagaries of time. It will last long. It will weather storms. It has no instability. Wherever there is love there is mutual confidence. Love is nobler than infatuation. It is more valuable and worthier than sex. It has no boundaries or limits. Sex and romance may have some standards to be measured and estimated. But there are no standards to determine or define love. To live in partnership and that too in pleasure and happiness may be said to be love. This feature alone is the pole star for guiding the ship of marriage.

The touchstone for a happy married life is sympathy which entails a desire for the progress of the other life-partner. Each partner has to look at the mistakes of the other with tolerance and sympathy. Haste and hurry in dealing with them may aggravate the situation. Human life is like the waves of an ocean. If we jump over those waves i.e., transcend the obstacles with courage, confidence, single-mindedness and perseverance then life becomes blissful. If we are afraid of the ebb and flow of the ocean of life we will be washed out. Both the wife and husband have to be pilots for the ship of marriage; the husband alone cannot be the pilot. Companionship blended with love is an art. That is the course of the life flavoured with mutual experiences. The relationship between the parties

completes and fulfils the human element in both husband and wife. For harmonisation of will and action love, affection and persistence are needed; sacrifice is also a necessary element. Lives informed by such understanding are bound to float merrily on the ocean of happiness. Each partner has to apprise oneself of the characteristics and aims and objects of life of the other. One's goal of life should be of interest to both of them. Mutual affection and respect must govern the relationship between the two. If both of them agree to live together as man and wife with mutual consent for the advancement of each other, then only can the relationship between the two evolve into true marriage. Every individual has a particular mode of thought and specific philosophy of life. Many persons may not know that they have such a philosophy of life. Sometimes the viewpoints of the life-partners may be different. Still, they have to live together with a spirit of mutual respect pervading their lives. Tolerance and adjustment are the main principles that contribute to a happy married life. But then, it should not always be the woman's lot to observe those principles. One partner's goals and ideals of life cannot be identical with the other's. But it is better to separate from each other than live together with feelings of jealousy and hatred towards one another. It is better for the married partners to go their own way by separation and divorce if they have conflicting and opposing temperaments. Married life carried on for the sake of prestige and society is devoid of complete bliss; it is bound to be full of misery and unhappiness. The aims and objects of life, the ideal of life and life-style have to be taken into consideration. Beauty of the mind rather than physical beauty should be the main attraction. Both have to strive to fill their daily lives with a sense of beauty of both mind and body. For that, a lot of labour, training and continuous striving are necessary. That is an art. The newly married must be votaries of that art.

Desire for sex is related to their individual personalities. They do not like to pollute it by sex experiences with others. The other partner is essentially a person wanted and desired. No other person can replace the loved one. Therefore mutual confidence is necessary if one wants to attain bliss in sex-relationship. It is only possible if the other person's likes and dislikes are taken into consideration in respect of sex-desire or love. One partner should not use the other as a tool. Likewise personality of one cannot be merged in that of the other. The newly married have to lay the foundation for a happy married life by striving to enhance each other's personality throughout.

Respect for monogamy will alone fill the cup of bliss of married life. This is possible only in the case of those who are endowed with love and refinement. For those who lack intellectual sincerity, maturity and unalloyed life, the principle of one partner for the entire life becomes not only a miserable bond but also a form of slavery. Therefore, it is not far wrong to depict such a married life as prostitution. Such a pair of married partners who abuse each other, who insult and injure the other and long for the other's death but compromise their quarrels to go to bed together in the night-time can never be the ideal pair. Only those wives and husbands who can see and observe boundless beauty, sky-high love and inimitable virtues in the life-partner can be deemed to be ideal partners. There is no place for a third person in the hearts of such a loving pair. The goal of marriage is a blissful married life full of love respect and beauty.

The modern marriage system provides for courageous separation as an alternative to sex-life based on compulsion, and a life devoid of mutual love, desire and attraction. That is why there is a longing and struggle for such modern marriages. Wherever such love and respect find place and ideas of liberty and equality abound, happiness and bliss will flourish. Only when such a state is reached will married life become meaningful and significant and the partners will attain their goal.

Marriages of the present times are of two different kinds. They are marriages arranged by elders, and love marriages. In the first category desire to marry precedes love and affection whereas in the latter love arises earlier than the will to marry. The aspects of life that go to fulfil love have been discussed up-till now. Married life without love loses all vigour, dynamism, meaning and significance. Similarly, married life informed only with love but lacking in other necessary qualities that go to make the marriage a success will become miserable and deplorable. Hence, it is essential that young men and women step into marriage with equanimity of mind and a balanced outlook failing which they will only be inviting disaster. It is no exaggeration to state that married life based on friendship and harmony will be pleasant, happy and blissful.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SEX

Is it wrong on the part of a woman to desire sex experience? What for is sex? Is it for begetting children only? What is the role of sex in marriage? Is it immoral on the part of unmarried women and widows to long for sexual union? Is the sex act, intended for satisfaction of a human being's physical and mental urge, immoral? Is it improper to study the experience in a scientific manner? When there is nothing wrong in obtaining knowledge about the eye, ear and nose why should there be so much taboo about acquiring scientific information about the private parts of the body? These are some of the questions that arise when sex is discussed and they demand adequate answers.

Many women are startled when sex is mentioned; some become confused. Yet others shiver in shame. A few get elated. The rest tremble with fear. This is the condition of women nowadays. Why is it that women exhibit such antagonistic feelings when the topic of sex is broached? The society in which they live, and the attitude of the men folk are the two factors that contribute to this situation. Treating women as equal to chattels, not giving them freedom, and not according them a status equal to men even when they are granted a little freedom-all these attitudes of men have brought women down even in their own view. If a woman decides that sex experience is necessary for her, desires happiness in a sex relationship and tries to seek ways and means of gratifying that longing, the other women deride her and men condemn her. All this happens because of the attitude of the society towards sex in general, and towards women in particular. At present, the rule is that sex should not be talked about. It should neither be heard nor discussed. Is there no place for sex in a woman's life? Is it not a fact that a woman is reminded of sex at every moment of her life after she attains age? Oh! What a commotion there is when it is reported that she has attained age! Neighbours and relatives are treated to feasts. Festivities reminding sex life are carried on. Less said the better about marriage. The mantras recited at the time of the consummation ceremony are revolting and disgusting. When she becomes pregnant a series of festivities are started. After confinement, again cer-

ceremonies are performed. Thus, there are a number of occasions in a woman's life when she is not allowed to forget sex. Another curious event is worth mentioning. If the moment at which the woman starts menstruating for the first time in her life is inauspicious, then, a propitiation ceremony is performed. Thus, at a young age, the woman is made to feel that there is something wrong with her. She suffers from a guilt complex throughout her life.

Some moralists have taken upon themselves the task to propagate the idea that a woman shall not seek happiness through the sex act and that she shall lead a sex life only for the sake of bringing forth children. Mahatma Gandhi belongs to this category. Some others maintain that as soon as a woman begets a son to discharge the debt to the Father Gods she shall take to a life of celibacy (Brahmacharya). In their view, sexual relationship between man and woman is only intended for procreation; if indulged in otherwise, it becomes reprehensible and even disgusting. But it does not appear that our ancestors have had the same outlook. Sex was not abhorred in the age of the rishis (seers). They gave sufficient importance to sex life. According to one view the Rishis were hedonists. They strove to make life blissful and fruitful. They studied sex as a science. Vatsyana's Kama Sutra illustrates this view. A distortion in the concept of sex has come about over the last one thousand years. Doctors and psychologists know full well the travails of men and women leading celibate lives, the unhappy situations in which they are caught and the mental agony and anguish to which they become subject. With these crude and unscientific theories, human nature and human qualities are being smothered. These pseudo pundits are tormenting the people with their ill-conceived and mistaken notions, while a set of insincere people lead artificial lives with double morality. Thus, the society is led astray.

There are not a few persons who propagate sex as a means for liberation of the spirit (Moksha). Persons like Rajneesh who established ashrams for carrying on sexual activities are legion. Sex has been given an abnormally exalted position in the Tantric method called 'Pancharatra'. The Hippies who consider modern society to be full of deceit, artificiality, lack of faith and sincerity, attempt to run away from it. They treat sex just as an instrument of pleasure. Consuming drugs and leading a promiscuous sex life has become their second nature. There are some people who compare sex to a drink. For them morality and society are no obstacles. Such abnormal schools of thought still persist.

To appreciate the role of sex in human life an understanding of the history of society is necessary. A knowledge of physiology is helpful. Awareness of the implications of psychological theories is imperative. To wallow in ignorance is undoubtedly not a sign of discretion. Physical elation arising out of sexual gratification is a human value. Likewise, mental happiness is another human value. Men and women choose one or the other-or care for one more than the other-depending on their mental and intellectual level. That sex plays an important role in human life is beyond question. No doubt here are some who prefer intellectual pleasure to the mental satisfaction arising out of indulgence in sex. But, by and large, all human beings desire and crave for physical pleasure and mental satisfaction. In the primitive society sex relationships were not regulated. Later, during the evolution of society, the need arose to regulate them. Marriage as an institution arose to determine the parents of the children. Children gained significance. Therefore, procreation was given supreme importance. It was treated as the very purpose of sex life, and as the object of marriage. Thus, the husband and wife who are to enjoy sex life became victims to these rules. It is deplorable and tragic.

The object of marriage has to be clearly and definitely delineated and specified. Men and women usually marry when they have mutual attraction, sympathy, love and affection. Some lead a family life without going through marriage. What ever be the mode of living, the main feature of the relationship is intimacy between the partners. When two persons of opposite sex become close and intimate mentally and socially, it is no wonder that sex creeps into their life. The main question to ponder over is whether sexual union should follow intimacy, or whether sex leads to intimacy. In fact both are interdependent; both are irrevocably linked. Common sexual experience may be said to be the ultimate stage of intimacy. Without sex, intimacy will never attain completeness. Similarly, sexual life of such partners strengthens the ties of intimacy.

Even though a man and wife may have different temperaments they become very close to each other because of the special relationship between them. If they carry on as lovers without any sex life, their life will become useless and fruitless. Later on they will be afflicted with psychological strain and suffering. To think that the sex act is only a physical process is a mistake notion. It relates both to body and mind. Experience of just sex without love smack of animal instinct.

Avoiding sex and adopting celibacy as a means to attain salvation (Moksha), leading a sex life only for begetting children, treating sex as a step in furtherance of salvation, craving for just sex without any conjunction of love and affection are all stray paths. Appreciating the fact that sex will be usefull to bring about or enhance intimacy and for giving the status of a human value at a certain level to the sex act are reflections of a healthy mind. When these facts are understood well there will be no danger of resorting to the extremes of condemnation or exaltation of sex. If sex is considered in a balanced, realistic and rational manner, all confusion is bound to disappear. Let us hope that the human race, and especially the indian people will reach that stage. Let us long for the day when women will lead comfortable and happy lives appreciating the appropriate role of sex after dispelling the several misconceptions relating to it.

## IS DIVORCE A WOMAN'S PROBLEM?

The modern women do not want protection. They demand liberation. The women intent upon a change in society are of the firm opinion that there is no greater punishment than leading an unhappy married life. Even in these modern times there are thousands of couples who believe that marital tie is sacred and nothing can separate the married partners except death. Our culture is the birth place of all orthodoxy and antiquated customs. It is the habitat of reactionary traditions. Our women's stature, status and position has not transcended the stage of the middle ages. That is why a woman who suffers silently having been insulted, abused and beaten by the husband is acclaimed as a chaste and noble wife. If a woman commits suicide having become the victim of rape or become an unwed mother, the society takes pity on her. But if she survives the humiliation and attempts to reform herself the society takes up an intolerant attitude towards her. The story does not stop here. It makes her life miserable. This is our culture indeed!

To decide and determine whether divorce is necessary only for women or only for men or for both one has to study the problem from several angles; the issue has to be looked at from the individualistic, sociological and historical considerations and viewpoints. The solution to the problem can be found out only when it is studied in all aspects and from several angles. If we look at the subject from the historical aspect, till 1948 the Hindu women had no right to divorce; even the man did not enjoy that right. This was the state of affairs in the composite State of Madras. Divorce Laws were enacted in 1948 in the Composite States Madras and Bombay in 1948. Then from 1955 onwards both Hindu men and women became entitled to claim divorce under certain conditions. With the passing of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 the entire country was affected and divorce became available to desiring parties. Prior to 1948 the Hindu male was entitled, according to Laws, to marry any number of women. There is no ceiling on the number of his wives. The women then could not demand divorce even if they suffered untold hardship at the hands of their co-wives. Prior to 1939, unless it was incorporated in the marriage contract, the Muslim Women could never dream of divorce. But the Muslim male can have four wives at one and the same time. Thus it is conclusively

proved that divorce is necessary, and in effect meant to relieve the women from the sufferings and troubles to which they are subjected. The Hindu, Muslim and Christian men did not suffer, by and large, in the absence of provision for divorce. It is relevant, in this context, to know somewhat about the march of Law and the nature of the Legislation. The statutes conferring right of divorce did not come into existence all of a sudden. They did not have their origin in a vacuum. They are intended to show a way out and salvation to the women who have been subjected to a lot of suppression and suffering. The laws are the result of incessant and perseverent struggles of the women's movement of India. Many Women's Associations and conferences passed resolution demanding divorce. They derived inspiration from the Western Women's Movements and carried on campaigns and agitations for the same. Progressive-minded men lent their support to these efforts on the part of women. Thus these laws came into existence. As our society is male-dominated naturally many of these laws are biased in favour of men. The Divorce Act applying to the Christians has the above features. A man desiring to get divorce from his wife can obtain it on proving that she is unchaste and adulterous. The case of the woman is different. She has to prove not only adultery on the part of her husband but something else, may be cruelty, bestiality or bigamy in order to get divorce. Likewise, a Muslim male can divorce his wife by uttering the word "Talak" thrice at one and the same time. The Muslim woman doesn't enjoy that privilege. The Hindu Law providing for divorce can be said to be more progressive than that of any other Personal Law. Thanks to the latest amendments divorce can be had by mutual consent. Moreover, it is possible to get divorce in the event of violence or desertion. The Hindu Woman can secure divorce by filing a petition whereas the Muslim woman has to file a suit for the same involving time, energy and money. The Christian Woman can get divorce only if a special bench of the High Court consisting of 3 Judges, grants it. How difficult and time-consuming it is need not be over-emphasised. Uptill now no Personal Law provides for divorce on the ground of incompatibility of temperament. Even the Special Marriage Act is silent about it. It is deplorable. Why should the married partners be compelled to disclose their family affairs and bed-room secrets? Why should they be pushed into that miserable state of affairs?

At present there is no provision for divorce on the ground of irretrievable break-down of marriage. If a woman makes such a declaration, at once divorce should follow. Significantly such a facility

is not there. A Bill was introduced in Parliament on the above lines. A Select Committee of the Lok Sabha toured entire country to take evidence on the Bill. Still the Bill amending the Marriage Law did not fructify into an Act (Later the Bill was defeated in Parliament as the ruling party gave freedom of vote to its members). In 1917 when Russian Revolution succeeded unilateral divorce by post card came into existence. In countries like Japan, China and Russia efforts to compromise the dispute between the married partners through the aid of family courts is prevalent now. We do not have many such Family Courts in our country and hence women undergo a lot of suffering. In 1976 right to get divorce by mutual consent was incorporated in the Hindu Marriage Act. So long as one of the parties entertains feelings of dislike and unhappiness the married life is nothing but "hell". Therefore it is just and necessary that the courts should grant divorce even at the request of either party. In human society the individual is a social being. The family is a type of social organisation. Therefore the individual can enjoy freedom in society only. Likewise family enhances the freedom of the individual and contributes to the grant of his or her personality. There is nothing wrong or depraved in a wife deserting her husband if he treats her as a tool or a slave or a pet animal and thus kills her individuality. Moreover it is not improper for a cultured wife to get rid of an uncultured and brutish husband for the sake of living a life of idealism and nobility. So long as decency and harmony between man and wife do not find place in their marital life it becomes rotten and creates heart-burning. The modern women are demanding freedom and equality. It is for the Government to make it easy for women to secure divorce with ease whenever it is necessary. The society should accept such a situation. The women have to attain that commanding position as to deserve that. If that situation is not brought about, divorce will remain the problem of women only.

## THE PROBLEM OF UNWED MOTHERS

People become agitated when they hear that an unmarried woman has become a mother. They condemn her conduct and detest her presence. The following crucial questions arise in this context. Does an unmarried woman possess the right to become a mother? Should progeny be brought forth only in a married state? How should a woman who has been deceived into motherhood conduct herself? Why should the society treat such a woman and her offspring cruelly? The problem has to be looked at from different viewpoints. It has to be studied from the aspect of the mother and the child, and also against the background of the society with an eye on social morality.

Uptill now society has ordained that a woman shall become a mother only in matrimony, and she shall present her virginity to her husband. Tradition and practice confirm this view. Religions support it. Thanks to the prevalent system of dowry many women are compelled to remain unmarried for no fault of theirs. They remain old maids; they do not like to marry widowers who are past middle age. Women who remain unmarried for a long time are blamed by neighbours and society. As years pass by nobody comes forward to marry them. Either they live in the parental home or sometimes with brothers in their homes. They are subjected to harsh treatment and they often vegetate. Can we reasonably say that these women are bereft of maternal instinct? What is the channel for the satisfaction of that maternal instinct?

The institution of motherhood has been praised over generations. Society has glorified it all along. All the same, it has laid down certain conditions and limitations. The main limitations is that it shall take place only in matrimony. Even though Hinduism extols a woman blessed with numerous children it disapproves of unmarried women becoming mothers. Let us not forget that Hinduism has condemned even child widows to a life of solitude and misery. In spite of the fact that Islam and Christianity permit widows to remarry, they do not approve of an unmarried woman begetting a child. The notion that offspring born in matrimony alone are sacred contributes to this view. This, in turn, is due to the desire of the men to be sure of their fatherhood.

It is the woman that carries the child in her womb for nine months. Nodoubt the man may have some share in begetting children but the major burden is borne by the woman. Hence, she should have the right to decide whether she should have children or not. Likewise, the woman is entitled to decide whether the father of the child shall be her life partner or not. This may sound preposterous to many. But a cool and calm consideration of the whole issue will enable us to appreciate this statement.

The aim and object of marriage is not just begetting children. It is something more. Only when there is love and affection, regard and consideration, similarity in ideals, and likeness in objectives between man and woman can they live as husband and wife. Only when friendship, harmony and a spirit of adjustment and compromise are manifest in day-to-day dealings between them can they reside in the same house as man and wife. If a woman does not come across a man who can entertain such feelings and adopt such an attitude towards her, can she marry anybody just for the sake of offspring? If she follows that course she will be practically ruining her life with her own hands. No sensible person can advise her to choose that option. The only way is to remain single. Then arises the question of her motherhood. There are two possible choices for her: To beget a child through a liaison with a man who answers to her expectation of a husband to a great extent, or to become pregnant by artificial insemination. This is the inescapable situation into which an unmarried woman is pushed into.

The child of an unwed mother is looked down upon in society. He or she is called an illegitimate progeny. What is the crime committed by the child? Even, if for any reason, the mother's act amounts to an offence or an immoral deed, what is the rationale in inflicting punishment on the innocent child? Its birth is not in its hands. It is neither wise nor proper to blame or condemn the child for no fault on its part. To call it by ignoble names and treat it harshly is neither just nor humane. After all, it is the duty of the society to create such an atmosphere wherein the children can grow into happy and harmonious individuals. There cannot be any exception to this healthy rule even in the case of illegitimate children. If the mother is always ridiculed, found fault with and blamed, how can she bring up the child in an atmosphere of happiness? Only a pleasant and contented mother glowing with vitality of spirit can rear the child well. Humane attitude towards the child demands that society treat the unwed mother with consideration and sympathy.

At present there is no law existing that prohibits an un-married woman from becoming a mother. No sentence of imprisonment or fine can be imposed on such a mother. Hence, one cannot say that it is illegal. The child is the legitimate offspring of the mother. It inherits its mother's property. But if the mother proves that particular man is responsible for her pregnancy then that person is considered as the putative father of the child and the child gets some share in that father's property. That is all so far as the law concerned.

The major religions of India i.e. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity put a premium on virginity. They lay down that a woman ought to become a mother only by her husband. Even in the USA, where pre-marital sex is a norm of society, an unwed mother is treated with scorn. Except in primitive societies and some tribes of Africa unwed mothers are not accepted in society. This shows the strength of a tradition which transcends the barriers of race, clime and country. But it does not prove its worth or validity.

In 1984 a lady by the name of Helen Morgan was adjudged to be the most beautiful woman in a worldwide beauty contest held in London. When it was found out that she was an unwed mother a hue and cry went up. She was forced to give up the award. Is this not a case of importing irrational ideas into the sector of beauty contest without any sort of relevance?

Nowadays many divorced mothers in the USA are giving up the idea of remarriage and are addressing themselves to the task of bringing up their children in a happy and healthy manner. They forego their pleasures and happiness for the sake of their children. They play the role of both mother and father to the child. Oftentimes single parent families are growing in number. Some people may have jitters when they think of a child brought up in a home without a man. This feeling is due to the prevalence of the male dominated society all along. But, in a society where men and women are treated as equals there can be no scope for such misapprehension. Some psychologists state that a healthy child cannot be reared in a family without a father. This is not true. This concept is born out of male chauvinistic tradition.

Generally, every woman would like to be a mother. Apart from this, situations do arise when a woman is tucked into motherhood. Some women resort to abortion; yet others resort to infanticide to escape social disapproval. After all, social morality depends on time and place. Our society condemns the unwed mother whereas in

Ghana she is highly prized and eligible gentlemen exhibit the enthusiasm to take her hand in marriage. According to them, he fertility is proved; there is no fear of her being barren. Even in our country, at one time it was not frowned upon. Sahodhajudu (Sahotha) is the name given to a son who was in the womb at the time of his mother's marriage. 'Kanina' is the son of an unwed mother. Karna of Mahabharatha is the son of Kunti, the unwed mother. The other sons of Kunti through lawful marriage led by Yudhisthira recognised the relationship and performed obsequies for Karna. Veda Vyasa but for whom the 'Kuru Vamsam' (Kuru family) could not have been continued was the son of Matsyagandhi and Rishi Parasara. At that time Matsyagandhi was unmarried. Many such stories can be related to prove that the ancients did not disapprove of the unwed motherhood.

Let not the reader run away with the impression that the writer is of the opinion that greater the number of unwed mothers, the better is the health of the society. That is far from her intention. But, at the same time it is to be emphatically stated that where mutual trust, confidence and intimacy reign supreme such relationship between man and woman is the best and the ideal one. This statement does not mean that an unwed mother is to be despised. It is to be left to the wise and balanced decision of the woman to choose to become a mother, if she likes it that way, in matrimony or outside it. It is unjust to pressurise her in the name of social morality. The children of unwed mothers should have legal status on a par with children born in matrimony. That child will bear her mother's family name. There is no difficulty on that score. Thus, it is high time that the society brings to bear a rational and scientific view over the whole problem and does justice to women in general, and unwed mothers in particular.

## ATROCITIES ON WOMEN

Is this the year of the rape of women? This is the question that agitates the minds of women. Today the issue of rape has gained gigantic proportions. Almost every day somewhere or the other a woman is being raped. Many an unfortunate woman is resorting to suicide as she is not in a position to speak out to others and lead a life of respect and dignity in society. A society has estimated the number of rape cases in the country as 2,00,000 per annum. Probably, the figure may appear exaggerated. In our country, statistics are not satisfactory. Anyway, it cannot be gainsaid that there are a large number of offences of rape each year. There are thousands of cases which do not see the light of day, or which go unreported. It has become a common occurrence; the life and honour of women fall victim wherever there is any agitation. It is mainly the poor women who are subjected to these atrocities. Should these voiceless women fall victim to the lust of the cruel and diabolical elements of society? Who are responsible for these horrible deeds? Are they the individual criminals? Is it the police force? Is the indifference of the Government the cause?

Did not rapes occur in the past or, did they not attract the attention of the people? The answer is simple. No doubt grave offences like rape were committed in the old days. But they are growing in number now. In those days news of those gruesome events did not reach the ears of the public. Out of consideration for the reputation of the victim and the prestige of the family such news was suppressed. Out of ten offences one or two got reported. Today the people's conscience has been aroused and a hue cry is raised at such injustice. Newspapers publish such news fearlessly. Therefore, one gets the impression that the number of offences is growing day-by-day.

An idea that rapes occur because of the flimsy and attractive dress worn by the victims is sedulously propagated. This allegation is false to the core. It is absurd and ridiculous. It is neither logical nor borne out by facts. Women are not seducing men who wear nice and charming dress. It is women of the poorer classes who wear coarse clothes that happen to be the victims. Women are

considered to be the property of men and hence whenever there is a fight between men, vengeance is taken on the enemy's wife, mother and sisters. They are abused in a scandalous manner. In a peculiar psychopathological state of mind men rape women. The superstition that intercourse with a girl of immature age will cure several diseases like gonorrhoea and syphilis also contributes in no small measure to the offence of rape.

Films and literature by and large are criminals in this matter. Film producers are competing with one another in portraying rape scenes as vividly as possible. They pander to the animal instincts of man. Not being content with that, they see to it that the stories of their films invariably end with the marriage of the victim to the assailant. These films are spreading the the cancerous message that a man can anyway get the woman on whom he wishes to wreak vengeance or showers his infatuation by subjecting her to rape and humiliation. The film producers introduce rape scenes in their films even our of context just to attract youth and make money. Their misdeeds have to be checked. So also may novels come into the market with such themes. Public opinon has to be roused so as to stop the rot.

The woman has been reduced to a show-case piece, a plaything and the property of her husband. She is weighed down by the feeling that she is bound to be subordinated by men. Hence, the power of resistance in women is dying down. Two groups quarrel resulting usually in one group raping the women of the other group and vice-versa. In fact, the woman is not to blame. She is smitten with shame and when she does not rise in revolt she suffers. Taking advantage of the woman's weakness in this regard, the culprit remains unpunished.

An amendment of the IPC was made recently by the Parliament by which the sentence was be enhanced from 7 to 10 years in rape cases. It stipulated a minimum sentence of 10 years to him if he happennd to belong to the police force. To imagine that offences can be prevented or their number reduced by merely raising the period of sentence is a misconception. The penalty of death sentence or murder is not restraining murders. What is the use of fixing higher punishments when steps necessary to bring home the guilt o the accused are not taken? First and foremost, the victim of ape must be given shelter and help. She has to be enabled to jet over the shock and regain a balanced state of mind. Then she has to be medically examined and her statement recorded. If investigation into the crime is then conducted and a case filed against

the accused, there will be chances of the accused being proved guilty. If the doctor is to give the certificate immediately then there would be no chance for the doctor to be influenced by the accused or his relatives or friends to give a false certificate. Attention is not devoted to these important aspects of the matter. Moreover, reports are pouring forth in sizeable number of instances of police officials, expected to be the custodians of lives and properties of citizens, themselves committing rape on defenceless women in police stations. Naturally, the confidence of the people in the police is undermined. Necessary measures have to be undertaken by the Government to remedy this situation and create the appropriate atmosphere required for preventing such crimes. Selection to the police force at the time of recruitment itself has to be properly made; the police have to be given adequate training to respect the citizens. The abominable practice of police officials insulting and humiliating the women folk of accused persons has to be given the go-by.

The fact that the accused happens to be a police officer should not weigh with the higher police officials. They should not help the accused, either directly or indirectly. As soon as a report is made in such cases of atrocities on women, investigation has to be proceeded with, irrespective of the fact of wealth or poverty of the complainant. Usually each group or class of people support their men, who happen to be the accused. The police too therefore act likewise to protect their men and maintain the prestige of the police personnel. The people will thus not only lose respect for the police but they will begin hating them. If the police conduct themselves with integrity and impartiality in investigation of crimes they are bound to get the support of the people. As a result, corruption, immorality, injustice and violence will disappear.

Let us make an earnest search for ways and means to prevent the crimes against women. Awakening in women's organisations, self-confidence in women, necessary courage and presence of mind in women for self-defence are absolutely necessary. Young women must learn the martial arts like karate. A raped woman can only recover from the shock if she is spoken to by a woman social worker with sympathy and consideration. At present society looks down upon them and treats them as characterless women. It is deplorable that, instead of showing sympathy to the victim, the women talk ill of her. It is a pity that there is no unity among women. Special and separate clinics have to be established to treat the victims of atrocities and to solve their physical and mental problems. Their complaints should be enquired into only by woman-police. There

should be 'Rape Victims Aid Centres' to give them succour, support and shelter at all times. There are societies in the USA to render such social, medical and legal aid. Taking inspiration from them, a centre is working in London. It is open all the 24 hours. Such centres should spring up in India also. No woman should be kept in police lock-up. She should be immediately removed to judicial custody. Arrest of women during nights has to stop. The victims should get free legal aid. Such cases should not be tried in open court. Reports of crimes may be published in the newspapers but without the names of the victims.

It is pertinent to note that as long as the idea that a woman is a thing to be owned does not leave the minds of the people, these atrocities are likely to continue. Hence, respect for a woman as a person has to be generated, cultivated and sustained. The guilty person must be excommunicated by not only the society at large but his own kith and kin. He must shudder at that thought. The potential criminals must be made to shiver in their shoes that they will be caught by the women of the neighbourhood, insulted and humiliated publicly. To attain this level of consciousness the women have to bestir themselves. Only the collective efforts of lovers of progress, social workers, legislators, women's organisations and youth can prevent such atrocities. Rowdies, goondas and anti-social elements should be subjected to social boycott. All the women must participate in this revolutionary activity of working for the welfare of their sisters with one voice. Those men who desire the advancement of women may lend a helping hand and strengthen the effort. Unless this is done this evil cannot be wiped out by legislation. After all, legislation has to take into consideration the human nature. Instead of being content with merely raising slogans to demand imposition and implementation of more severe punishments in cases of atrocities against women it is better and more desirable to mobilize public opinion to organise all the civilized persons in the society and to enter the arena of action. Then, and then only will these obnoxious misdeeds and atrocities cease.

## IS THERE A CHANGE IN WOMEN'S OUTLOOK ?

At present, a Hindu woman can get a share, as of right by birth, in the ancestral property of her father. Judicial decisions are affirming the right of a woman to refuse to live with a husband whom she does not like. Women's universities are being established. Women are being appointed as judges and vice-chancellors. Employment and educational opportunities for women are growing. Women are winning gold medals in the fields of sports and education. They are taking to different occupations in thousands. The idea is gaining ground that these developments have brought about a change in women's life. Is all this women's progress? Is there a change in a woman's outlook? If these questions are to be answered, in one view of the matter one has to say 'yes'. In another view of the matter the reply is 'No'. This means that on close critical self-examination we have come to the conclusion that there has been no fundamental change in women's life today. No doubt there is a change in the form and manner. Therefore, we dare not proclaim that there is a change. We can take the eve of Independence of our country as the watershed. We got out independence fortyseven years ago. Fortyfour year have elapsed after the framing of the Constitution. From that time onwards three different view points have prevailed. According to some viewpoints a woman is man's property. Some proclaim that she is not entitled to a status equal to man. It is not uncommon to come across persons who cherish the view that a man and woman are equal.

Many instances can be given to substantiate the proposition of lack of fundamental change in a woman's life. When a father gives away a daughter in marriage to the bridegroom, in fact, he is transferring his right of control over the daughter to her husband. That is how the husband has acquired the right to demand that the wife should live with him at his place of residence. Yet another instance is striking. It is the woman that bears the child for full nine months and gives birth to it. In spite of this, that father becomes guardian of the child. The mother is nowhere in the picture. Thus, the principle of equality is set at naught. We are conversant with

the bitter truth that the girl is discriminated against from her very birth. Well ! there may be a rejoinder that we are not concerned with the present situation of woman; we are interested in her outlook. Let us consider it. Women of poor families have been working all along. At one point of time it was considered shameful for women of middle class to work outside their homes. At present even these women are anxiously seeking jobs. There was a time when it was considered a grave offence on the part of a woman to walk on the road with footwear. In those days women used to feel ashamed to put on spectacles even if they were suffering from diseases of the eye and having problems with their eye-sight. Attending public meetings by women was considered as transcending of the boundaries of propriety. But, at present, women are driving motor cars, undertaking air-travel and using modern devices for better living. They are wearing colourful dresses and are moving about as butterflies. Seeing all this many people contend that a great change has come about in women and that their outlook has undergone a transformation. An illusion is created that there is a change in outlook by ignoring the fact that this is all due to the advancement of civilisation. Change is inevitable. Science grows along with them. New tools are made; new machines are invented; we learn how to live a comfortable and pleasant life. But to mistake it for a new outlook is a sign of ignorance. This misconception arose out of confusion between civilisation and culture. It is time to consider whether, after all, there is a fundamental change in ideas.

Thouth a woman may be holding a higher office than her husband. and in spite of the fact that her pay packet may be bigger than that of her husband, she has to do heavy work at home after return from the office. She has to look after the children, and her home besides her office work. Thus she is over burdened. Yet, it is considered widely that all these tasks are her responsibilities. Who is it that proclaimed this doctrine? It is not just the man. The woman too says the same. She is not revolting against this state of affairs. On the other hand she literally runs into the house after office to make coffee and serve her husband. The question that is being raised now is whether it is improper for the person who comes home first, even if it be the husband, to make coffee and serve the other. The woman obeys the commands of her husband. Patiently and contentedly, she carries on the load of work, satisfying her conscience that after all as woman she is inferior to man. She will convince herself that it is woman's bounden duty to look after the home, raise a family and entertain the husband. This process

is called 'internalization' of the man-made values, opinions, customs and traditions. This situation has been the same all along. It is asked whether there is no change at all. It is impossible not to be affected by time. Society is always undergoing the process of change, and therefore ideas are bound to change.

The old society which was wholly dependent on agriculture is not there my more. Industrialisation has enabled towns and cities to grow. The pressure of population in cities is giving rise to new ways of life, let alone new modes of dress and life-style. The old joint family has given place to the nuclear family. Women of all classes are compelled to take up jobs because of the situation created by rising prices. The crucial point to be noted is that the husband alone exercises control over the earnings of both. Even when properties are acquired by the family, they are purchased in the name of the husband. The wife always entertains the opinion that her husband is more intelligent, more capable and efficient than herself. This outlook is common for all women, whether they be doctors of philosophy or medicine, the peoples' representatives like the MLAs and MPs, or ordinary voters. Therefore it is not surprising that she has been accorded a secondary place at home and in society. Is this not a reflection of the old society ?

The next question that confronts us is whether there is a new outlook among women in respect of education, marriage and employment. It is gratifying to note that literacy among women has grown from 3 per cent on the eve of Independence to 39.71 per cent now. But, for what is this education? Is it for acquiring knowledge? Is it for reduction in the dowry to be paid, or is it for obtaining a husband of standing and status in the society? Is it because of the idea that it is better to educate the unmarried girl rather than allow her to be idle? These are the aspects to be pondered over. There is no fundamental change of view with regard to education. Why should any woman go in for employment? Is it for the development of the personality, or is it for exhibition of skill and expertise? Young women who have attained proficiency in several skills and vocations work till they are married. Thereafter they are under the command of their husbands. They will give up their jobs if their husbands desire so. The working woman does not entertain the opinion that she has to depend on herself, and that she has responsibility of her own. Can this be termed change? Even in the matter of choice in marriage, man has an advantage. How many women think that it is a blow to their individuality and demeaning to their self-respect to give dowry? Of late a new type

of bridegroom has sprung up. This type is very particular about marrying a career girl. These men seem to feel that a working girl will be earning for at least 40 years. That is enough reward, and a good substitute for dowry. Thus, their desire for dowry is not given up; it merely takes a new shape. On the other hand many women are not in a position to claim their legitimate share of the property they inherit. Many Muslim ladies give up their share of their parent's property in favour of their brothers. They are afraid that if they claim their share they will not be received with courtesy and kindness by their brothers in their parental homes. Thus, there is no change in the temperament of women who subordinate themselves to men as daughters and mothers. It has been ingrained in the minds of women that a woman is a second rate individual in the sectors of life political, economic, social and cultural.

Our country is philosophically in the 16th century, socially in the 19th century and technologically in the 20th century. That means that our ideas are nearly 400 years old. If anybody contends that men and women are equal, men take recourse to absurd arguments. They wish to show that the difference has been ordained in God's creation. They base their right to superiority and domination on the basis of Creation. The weak women do not protest. This story has been the same through all the ages. Several questions arise. Is it absolutely necessary to change the woman's outlook? Are there any attempts in that direction? What are the obstacles? How is it that these absurdities prevail? How to change these artificial values? These are certainly complicated issues.

Why is it that a man shrinks from marrying a woman who is more intelligent and efficient than himself? Almost every man longs for a wife who will remain subordinate to him and abide by his decisions and always looks to him for orders and commands. The husband has even the right to sell his wife! She had to jump into the furnace if her husband so orders. Thanks to change in the circumstances sati, bride-price, polygamy and child marriage have been abolished. Anyway, it is of no effect if one in a million changes for the better. Why is it that the number of women who are committing suicide by burning themselves grows year by year. We have to think about the issue coolly and calmly. As we have not inculcated the spirit of individuality and self-respect among women, they are not able to stand the strain and stress of life and hence they go in for self-immolation.

It is true that the principle of equality has found a place in

the laws of the land and the Constitution. Unless the attitude towards a woman undergoes a metamorphosis, the rights to equality cannot be enjoyed by women. Rights are there not to be given and granted; they are not to be begged for. The rights accrue by virtue of the women's very existence as persons. In other words, it is their birthright. To enable the women to claim and enjoy these rights, their view about themselves must be modified.

If both men and women are governed by the same principles of morality, then these discriminations and abnormalities will vanish. So long as one individual suppresses the other, the suppressed individual is bound to protest and rise in revolt. It is in conformity with the principle that every object resists pressure. It has to be observed that only those values which promote the progress of society sustain themselves. Therefore, it is desirable and necessary that we give the go-bye to old values that oppress woman. We have to inculcate modern values and cultivate the appropriate bent of mind. The people in general and women in particular have to get rid of mental slavey and moribund temperament. Anyway, it has to be categorically stated that there is no basic change in the outlook of women. It is a deplorable fact.



## COMPULSORY FAMILY PLANNING

The subject of family planning hit the headlines of news-papers in 1975 and 1976 when the idea of compulsory sterilization was mooted. It may be difficult for any person to come to any definite conclusion about the desirability of compulsory family planning unless all the facts and views are borne in mind. Before expressing an opinion on the controversial move for compulsion, one has to analyse the situation, dispel the misgivings, examine the concept on the anvil of human freedom, discuss the practicability or otherwise of the move and even suggest severral phases of the experiment.

It may not be out of place to note the phenomenal growth of population in the world as well as in our country when related to the available habitable area. The habitable area of earth is estimated to be 55.5 million square miles. It is stated that this area can sustain and support a population of only 600 crores. It is said that the world population was 5 lakhs in 1800 B.C.; it grew to 1 crore around the time Christi was born, 38.5 crores by 1492 A.D., 100 crores by 1830 A.D., 214 crores by 1940 and 300 crores by 1971. It is about 570 crores at present. By 2000 A.D. it is expected to rise to 620 crores. By 4000 A.D. there may not be enough breathing space. And, by about 8000 A.D. man may have just enough space to stand but not enough to move about. Figures and estimates vary but the fact stares us in the face that man is likely to lose the opportunity to lead a meaningful life if this trend continues. Let us consider the case of our country. It commands only an area of 2.5 per cent of that of the world. Yet, our country has to sustain a population which is 16 per cent of that of the world. Now Indian populations 90 crores in 1994. According to the latest estimates, world population is about 900 million. Each year adds about 18 millions to Indian population i.e., equivalent to the total population of the continent of Australia. Our per capita consumption of food has fallen to 12.4 ounces from 12.8 ounces. There are about 60 million unemployed, let alone the under-employed. As per one estimate, society has to establish 2.5 lakhs of schools, train 4 lakhs of teachers, and provide 35 lakhs of jobs per year to meet the needs of just the annual growth of population. It cannot be denied that,

whatever be the system of government we have, it is impossible to provide necessities like housing, schools, hospitals and jobs straightaway. Therefore, one is constrained to come to the conclusion that some limitation on the growth of families has become imperative.

It is not unusual for analysts to consider the proposal of family planning on the anvil of welfare-welfare of the individual, family, country and the world. Uptill now the world happens to be a male-dominated one. The man maintains the woman. But now a change of outlook is the order of the day. The woman is coming into her own. She is aspiring for gainful employment of her time and demanding avenues for the expression and utilisation of her talents. She expects to be treated as an individual and not as a thing, and that too as an individual equal in status to man. Naturally, her hopes and expectations cannot be ignored any longer. But, in order to play a significant role in human affairs, the woman must bring out her latent talents and potentialities. She needs culture and education is a means for the attainment of culture. In order to obtain education-education is not just school or collegiate education; it is a continuous process-she must have leisure. She has to be rescued from the position of a child-bearing machine or a mere object of gratification of man's pleasure. Inevitably the woman has to opt for family planning if she is to lead a decent life with self-respect. In fact it can be said without any fear of contradiction that family planning ushers in another revolution in a woman's life. This aspect has been recognised even in Communist China which officially scoffs at the Malthusian doctrine of growth of population being in geometrical proportion while the food resources grow in arithmetical proportion. Even in the case of man, family planning becomes of a must. He should have sufficient time to improve his skills in trade and industry and even to enrich his life, let alone serving the country by contributing his mite. In fact his sort of attitude is being encouraged even in Communist China.

Let us ponder over the case of children. Lesser the number of children greater the attention that is paid towards their welfare education, clothing, health, upbringing and cultural growth-for the means of the average family are bound to be very limited for a long time to come.

Our country has been borrowing, and receiving aid of one kind or the other from other countries. We have been exploring the bowels of the earth for mineral resources and searching the beds of seas for marine food. Yet our progress in these and allied fields do not enable us to meet our ever-growing needs.

Now, when we look at the world we are warned by ecologists that man's interference with nature is such that he is upsetting its delicate balance. We are threatened with extinction of natural resources. In this context the quarrel between the 'Haves' and the 'Have-nots' among the nations fades into insignificance. Not that the distribution of available wealth and resources equally among nations and among human beings is unimportant, but we are challenged to face the fact of not being able to provide the bare wherewithal for the world population.

Certain groups of individuals and sections of population in our country are still, even in 1994 A.D., raising many objections to the acceptance of the family planning programme. Their arguments are diverse and sometimes ludicrous. Prejudice begets many arguments and mostly leads to search for untenable pleas. The objections can be classified as relating to nature, sin, morality, prevention of birth of geniuses, diminution in numbers of the cultured, dangers of the birth control operations, and politics. Ingenuity reigns supreme and no argument is too absurd to be pressed into service. Let us try to deal with the genuine misconceptions and refute the motivated misgivings.

The first objection is that a limitation on the reproduction of human beings is against nature itself. This cannot stand the test of reason, for we see hundreds of thousands of living beings perishing in the course of nature. For instance, not all the progeny of fish survive. Again, many species like large mammals have become extinct. In fact nature is limiting and not contributing to the numbers of living organisms. Another specious plea is that by following family planning mankind is committing waste. Humans are to conform to nature and each couple has to bring forth as many beings into existence as possible. This is fallacious for out of millions of spermatatozoa contained in one discharge of a male, only one may impregnate the ovum. The rest die. Likewise, in the case of a female, ova produced during all months by the ovaries do not receive spermatozoa and become fruitful. Waste is inherent in nature.

Religious-minded persons talk of sin when they protest against family planning. They say that family planning is tantamount to child murder. This is absurd for when fertilization of ovum does not take place no living being is born. There is no child to be murdered and hence all feelings of guilt are misconceived.

The third objection trotted out relates to morality. The opponents contended that adoption of contraceptives and other family

planning techniques encourages immorality. This is not true. Immorality reigned supreme even before these measures were conceived. The Hindus created a caste of 'Dev Dasis' (prostitutes) to gratify themselves. Muslims did not lag behind. Their harems were always full of women. Prostitution is said to be the 'oldest profession'. Family planning did not give rise to prostitution. On the other hand family planning eliminates double standard of morality and helps the development of responsible moral behaviour in human beings. We can boldly affirm that the men and women of this day are conducting their affairs with a greater sense of morality than their ancestors. Hence, this objection falls to the ground.

The objectors recount cases of famous persons who were either the 7th or 8th child of their parents and say that their services would not have been available to the world if their parents had only desired two or three children. but genius is 90 per cent industry and 10 per cent intelligence. It is nurture that contributes to the genesis of genius,more than nature. Anyway, there are thousands of cases of an only child becoming a useful and talented individual. Apart from that even inborn intelligence will die down if the environment is not conducive to its effulgence. Family planning helps the process of emergence of a healthy and favourable climate for intelligence to flourish.

Some well meaning friends object to the programme as, in their view, it tends to limit the number of cultured persons, leaving the number of hewers of wood and drawers of water to grow without limit. This fear is unfounded for, after the adoption of a scheme of incentives, the so-called masses take to the programme with enthusiasm. Moreover, the influence of the cultured does not depend on numbers. In reality their number has always been small but their sway over the minds of the people is out of all proportion to their number.

Barring political reasons, the last defence seems to be the dangers of the birth control operations. In this age of advancement of science, to speak about such dangers is deplorable. The operations are simple and effective. Moreover, the post-operational marital life of such a couple will be happier than in the past.

The last bastion is that of politics. There are two sets of opponents in this field. The first one objects on the ground that as Muslims are unresponsive to the programme, Hindustan will become lesser in number and ultimately this country will be lost to Muslims. Facts belie this contention for after the introduction of incentives even

Muslims are taking to the programme. The percentage of Muslim adopters is in keeping with the percentage of Muslims in the total population. Apart from this, no child is born a Hindu. it is just born; it is brought up either as a Hindu or a Muslim. We have to emphasise the humanness and not the religion of the child. Another set of objectors are sea-green 'revolutionaries'. They proclaim that the Government has been propagating this programme of population control as it could not, being capitalist in nature, provide the people with food and other necessities. Hence they contend that they must oppose it as harmful to the interests of the working class and as having a deadening influence on the workers' political consciousness. This attitude suffers from dual morality and hypocrisy. Such 'revolutionaries' adopt family planning techniques themselves so that they may be free to serve the people the better, but ask the workers to breed paying no heed to family planning propaganda. Even from the viewpoint of the workers, this attitude is dangerous for the workers' lot is not going to be vastly improved overnight. Hence, the workers have to consider the present deplorable conditions and adopt appropriate attitudes and methods to better their lot. Another hurdle is put forward by some persons posing to be experts on defence startegy. They say that India must increase her population in order to withstand the possible onslaught by Communist China which commands a larger population. At present the techniques of warfare do not depend on numbers. The world situation has changed to a great extent. Hence this plea has no validity.

The time is now ripe for making family planning compulsory. This view is not inconsistent with the concept of individual freedom which is dear to the hearts of Humanists. Fundamental rights of citizens are not absolute in nature. They are hedged in by conditions. They are mostly subject to public order, health and morality. Therefore, in order to preserve and sustain the individual freedom of millions of women, involving as it does their right to good health--let us not forget that they have been denied all along the right to live a decent life--compulsory sterilization has to be resorted to.

Compulsory family planning cannot be imposed upon the entire people all at once. It has to be adopted by stages and sections of the people. To start with, those connected with public administration such as Ministers, legislators, popular heads of local self-governing bodies, administrators and government employees may be called upon to observe family planning compulsorily. In the second

stage, it may be extended to public sector employees and workers. In the last stage it may envelop the entire people. All of this programme may cover a span of six to nine years. This sort of plan is practicable and desirable. It will dispel the fears that compulsion is likely to lead to corruption and tyranny in the absence of a clean administration and a bureaucracy committed to the ideal. Any other policy will defeat its purpose.

The citizens are called upon to decide what is good for themselves irrespective of the attitude and policy of the government. Let us not just react. Let us act ourselves.

## SHOULD PROSTITUTION BE MADE LEGAL?

Many prominent persons were writing letters to the Editor in Daily Press urging abolition of restrictions on the profession of prostitution. Such letters were published in the cities of Bombay and Delhi. They have advanced the following line of argument in support of their plea.

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act is defective. It is very difficult if not impossible to implement any legislation, however rigid it may be in the social field. The Police Department is becoming immoral and corrupt thanks to the several defects and lacunae in the said act. Therefore social life is being corrupted. The real offenders are escaping the clutches of law. The venereal diseases are spreading far and wide. Even married women are becoming prostitutes.

It may be mentioned that all these grounds are not urged by all the advocates of legalisation. Each category of persons is putting forward one or more reasons. But all of them seem to agree that prostitution must be legalised and that the Government should control the profession. According to them the Government is to grant licences to brothels and to determine the distance of their location from educational institutions. In addition the Government is expected to stipulate and prescribe periodical medical check-ups for prostitutes and also get them treated for various diseases. Mr. Enrich Medina, a member of Parliament of Philippines moved a private bill in the Parliament of that country on similar lines. The women of that country protested against the bill and opposed it. They cited the following factors in support of their opposition. The bill contributes to the growth of prostitution. It complicates the country's social and economic problems. The people, and that too women, ought to take up such professions and follow such vocations that will enhance the purity of life and the status of individuals. It is no doubt true that it is the duty of women to contribute to the social and economic development of the country.

It may be good for the country to earn profit and foreign traffic in

human flesh. As prostitution arose out of economic causes the Parliament has to enact laws to enable women to follow honourable and profitable vocations. The Philippine women made some suggestions. They proposed that advertisements, whether local or foreign, soliciting offers by Philippine women for marriage or other vocations should be banned. They demanded that all those who make propaganda instigating the Philippine women to follow immoral or illegal or objectionable trades and vocations should be punished.

The private bill, mentioned above, of the Philippine Parliament got wide publicity. The International Press gave headlines to the news. In 1981 March, Asian women held the first preparatory conference on "Prostitution". Women belonging to Indonesia, Japan and Philippines attended. The American women attended as observers. In that conference many facts came to light. Many women are being taken abroad from Thailand, Philippines and Refugee Camps of Cambodia for the purpose of prostitution. During the second world war 1700 Japanese women and 10,000 Korean women were engaged to provide "entertainment" to the Japanese soldiers. 8,000 Philippine women were in this obnoxious trade in Japan in 1981. Women were being induced to go to Japan for excursions from the countries of Philippines, Brazil, Thailand, Korea and Taiwan and then later dumped into the flesh-trade. The Japanese males were literally invading the country of Philippines in the name of excursions for "pleasure" and pastime. The conference condemned all these practices.

In our country the situation is not far different. Young girls are seduced and brought to cities like Bombay and Madras to take up their residence in the red-light areas. Once a woman enters that district all chances of her escape from the miserable life obtaining there recede. It is no wonder that they die in the prime of their age. Be it noted that in our country not only economic but social factors lead to the prevalence of this immoral and objectionable custom and practice.

Prostitution is usually called the oldest profession. So long as ignorance, innocence, poverty and deceit are prevalent in society either women or men stray from the path of virtue. To commit a misdeed by mistake is one thing. But a fallen woman or man taking up an immoral vocation whether it be as the result of that mistake or as punishment is different. It is absolutely necessary to differentiate between the two. Immorality in sex relations may not be eliminated; society may feel powerless to do so. But the society can bring about

a situation where there will not be any need to follow the profession of prostitution or continue doing the same out of force of circumstances. The responsibility of the politicians in this regard is very great. The government has to provide alternative opportunities for eking out livelihood. The prostitutes have to be rehabilitated in society. Herein comes the role of voluntary social workers and sociologists. The values that determine social morality have to undergo a change. Virtues like tolerance, patience and generosity have to be established in society. Nodoubt this is a difficult task; this is a patient job to be carried on. But then somewhere sometime it has to be begun. The learned and intelligent men and women have to attack the forces that prevent solution of this problem; it has to be a concerted and collective move. Only then can this be solved. Tinkering with the Act i.e. the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act piecemeal cannot and will not yield results. This is not a problem of any one country. This is a world problem; this is the problem of humanity. The speedy solution of this problem depends upon the depth of understanding and the keenness of insight in appreciating the problem, realising its spread and recognising its intensity.

## GODDESS OF MOTHERHOOD IN MARKET PLACE

The woman who is worshipped as a goddess of motherhood is pushed into the market place; the woman who is respected as a mother is shown half-naked in cinema posters. All this is being done to enable businessmen to earn advantages and profit. These are the outpourings of many an anguished heart in our society. Not only that. We come across people who deplore the use of a woman's figure as a sex symbol in advertisements of commodities like soaps. These people are pained to see the degradation of the 'Indian woman's culture'. Many people are becoming indignant as they are afraid that men who happen to see such obscene posters may become depraved. Yet some others condemn the practice of women taking up jobs of sales girls and models as they see a danger of women becoming immoral because of the very nature of their employment. It is surmised that the day of degradation of society is not far off when money is being earned by business circles by exploiting the body of the woman. The wail goes up that it is the beginning of the decline of morality when a woman is shown or painted half-naked in films, cinema posters and literature.

### What is obscenity?

The agitation is mounting against the names of certain films like *Manmatha Kreeda* (Manmatha's Play) *Kama pisachi* (Lusty Devil), *Avasaraniki O Adathi* (Woman to Meet a Need) which are highly objectionable and immoral. Indeed, in the case of names like *Manmatha Kreeda* crude English equivalents like Sexual Intercourse have also been used. That the cinema posters relating thereto cause disgust and abhorrence, that they bear evidence to the moral degradation of the society and that such film makers ought to be punished is certain. Now the real problem comes into the purview of discussion. Many questions arise. What is propriety? What do we mean by obscenity? What is beauty? What contributes to depravity? What are the standards to determine these qualities? Which is the touchstone? Who are the persons to determine what is proper and what is objectionable? Is there any relationship between impropriety

and offence? Or should it be only treated as a social evil? What are the means to be adopted to eliminate that evil?

Some more questions relating to offences too crop up. Is it an offence to read obscene literature? Is it wrong to see such a film? Is it improper to write such a story? Does it become a crime only when a person reading the story or seeing the film behaves in a depraved manner or does it become *per se* an offence? Is it possible to enforce legislation regarding such crimes?

Obscenity is being specially looked at only in terms of sex. In Sec. 292 I.P.C. obscenity is defined as that which, whether it is a book or film, when read or seen brings out the sexual urges into the foreground, depraves human conduct and leads to human degradation. Another definition can be offered that it is that which runs against the moral concepts and sentiments of the present-day society. It can easily be seen that the latter definition suffers from many defects and weaknesses.

### **Revolution In Morals**

Many changes have taken place in our moral values. One is tempted to call it a revolution in morals. Changes of this sort are a must; they are inevitable too. Society is undergoing change at a rapid pace. There can be no two opinions about the fact that the change is in accordance with the mores of the country, times of the society, and the people that compose it. What was moral at one time is considered as immoral now. At one point of time it was considered proper for Draupadi to have five husbands. Nowadays such a practice is scoffed at. In northern India marriage between cousins i.e. between children of brother and sister is abhorred and banned whereas in the South it is a desired practice. If a wife dies the man marries his wife's sister in our country but it is not permitted in England. Thus, the customs and traditions differ from one country to another from one age to the other, and they vary according to circumstances. Long long ago Sati, Kanyasulkam (Bride price) and child marriages were praised as highly moral acts. They were respected as the customs of the day. Today they are condemned. Till 1856, widow marriages were looked down upon. At present, they are permissible and valid. In fact they have been accepted as normal social practice. In the same manner so many other changes are taking place. Changes are the stepping stones for progress. If obscenity is linked up with social tradition, a lot of confusion will ensue.

Hence, to define obscenity as that which provokes feelings of sex together with a sense of depravity of human conduct seems to be better. Once we accept the above definition another question stares us in the face: whether the obscenity apparent in ancient literature and sculptures is to be condemned?

### Ancient Sculptures

There are many sculptures on the walls of ancient temples like Konarak, Khajuraho, Nepali Temples of Benares, and even in the temples and temple cars in the Telugu country depicting sexual congress of men and women in different poses and stances. Thousands of men and women, native and foreign, look at them with pleasure and admiration. Unadulterated sex abounds in the texts of our ancient Kavyas. No less a poet than Valmiki has described the phases of sexual union of Rama and Sita; Rama relates them to his brother Lakshmana. In the name of God's acts, the sexual exploits of Krishna were painted in words in detail in *Geeta Govindam*. The reputed devotional poet Pothana has excelled in enumerating the sexual pranks of Lord Krishna. Kshatraya's free verses, Annamacharya's kirtans and even Ramada's devotional songs are of the same kind. Kalidas tarried for long in his *Kumara Sambhavam* in delving into the depths of the romantic sexual union of Siva and Parvati. Pothana's verse portraying Vishnu rushing to the aid of Gajendra even without giving up his hold on the cloth covering the breasts of Lakshmi, and Peddana's poem relating to the attempt of Varuthini to embrace Pravarakhya have become highly popular. Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra*, is being considered as a book of science on sex. Why is it that we do not carry on agitation to destroy these temples? Why is it that we refrain from urging people to burn that literature?

### Romance and Obscenity

We are not condemning all kinds and varieties of obscenity. For that matter we are not even against naked sex. Those sculptures were intended to promote sex education when there was no printing press and hence we regard them with consideration. That is why the bold pictures on temples and temple cars are being accepted by us. Not being content with that, we approve of a kind of obscenity in the name of literature.

We are conscious of the fact that life without romance and sex is neither rich nor exuberant. That is exactly why we crave for them and are anxious to beautify our lives. Two questions spring up now. Whether romance is there only to enable other Rasas to

flourish? Or whether romance and sex are expected to subserve social purpose?

As society has accepted obscenity under certain conditions and circumstances, it looks as though we are giving greater importance to social purpose. Therefore, when we see a picture or a sculpture or read a writing we have to seriously ponder over the following questions: Whether it constitutes obscenity? Whether it contributes to literary values, even if it is obscene? Whether it serves a social purpose, even if it is obscene?

Sometimes we come across obscenity with social purpose in a picture, sculpture or writing. Our acceptance or rejection of the same depends upon the dominace of either social purpose or obscenity.

### **Crime and Punishment**

If exhibition of obscenity is a crime, who is to determine whether the offence has been committed or not? Is it the police, or is it the judiciary? Is it the society? or Is it social scientists, social workers, educationists, psychologists and such others?

Can such offences be prevented? Will an attempt to prevent them fail, just like the old prohibition law? It has to be thought over. Is public opinion the means of prevention, or is it governmental repression?

When we condemn obscenity as that which promotes animal instincts in man and causes depravity, the question which type of man is meant assumes importance. Are we to take into consideration immature human beings or adults? Similar questions and doubts intrude into our minds.

### **Mother**

Anguish is caused when woman, a symbol of motherhood, is thrust unceremoniously into the market place. The articles that are traded in the market are commodities. They are objects of sale and purchase. Woman shall not be dealt with as a commodity.

That a women should be looked upon as a mother only is a matter of secondary importance. She has been discharging several responsibilities and duties in her family, in society and in her country. She helps her husband as his love, companion and life partner. She has different relationships with her brothers, sisters, parents, children and friends. She has various obligations and variegated natures. Yet,

only her motherhood is being emphasised. One is led to suspect whether there is a sinister effort to bring home the idea that a woman is meant only to bear children. The personality of the woman has undergone a metamorphosis. To beget children or not now depends upon her will and pleasure. It can be safely asserted that she has gained some liberation, thanks to the progress in technology concerning child-birth and birth control. Hence, to consider a woman always and at all stages of her life as a 'mother' pure and simple is a gross misconception.

### **What is to be Done?**

Such obscene cinema posters, literature, sculptures and paintings which not only provoke sex instincts in the viewer or reader but also impel the man to commit rape, indecent assault or atrocities on women are to be condemned outright. There can never be any doubt in that respect. But then, to grant that authority of prosecuting persons for obscenity to the police or, for that matter, the Government is dangerous. If they are so clothed with authority, there is the danger of the Government obstructing social progress by banning literature and art forms subserving social purpose on the plea that they go against the law of obscenity. Therefore, it is better to encourage the people to disapprove of such writings, paintings or sculptures. We have to build up the necessary public opinion for this purpose.

Let us take the case of models, sales girls and air hostesses. These ladies dress themselves beautifully. They are given employment as it is expected that their beauty will be pleasing to look at and will be appreciated by the customers and passengers of air services. No doubt these girls face some embarrassment and suffer annoyance when they come across scoundrels. Models are of two kinds. Those who partake in fashion parades and present new dresses and those who serve as models to painters, photographers and sculptors. It is true that immoral artists sexually abuse these women sometimes. This is an occupational hazard. So long as there are employers who are intent upon taking advantage of a woman employee, as long as the society has not attained that standard of culture which can guarantee inviolability of person and dignity to women, these dangers will continue to exist. To ban women taking up jobs of models, sales girls and air hostesses on the plea that their personal safety is endangered is not commendable for it has dangerous implications because once this kind of reasoning is accepted, the women will be pushed back into the kitchen.

### **Beauty, Charm and Impropriety**

The sales girls and air hostesses need not exhibit their bodies. In fact they do not do so. It is not wrong to be beautiful nor is it a crime to adorn oneself attractively. There is no necessity to disregard beauty and charm. It is neither fair nor proper to infer that every male who looks at a beautiful woman or a charming lady will long to cohabit with her and resort to atrocities against her.

There is nothing wrong or improper in women seeking to take up employment as sales girls, air hostessess and models. Safeguarding self-respect and preserving the integrity of one's personality depends largely upon the individual. It is a mistake to think that it depends entirely upon the above mentioned professions or vocations.

## SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK FOR MOTHERS

The child, and thereby the family and society, are influenced by the mother. Our society is a conglomeration of many religious groups. The Hindu society is vertically and horizontally divided into several castes. By the very nature of religion, each religious group exhibits intolerance towards others. Hindus call others 'mlechchas'; Islam terms non-Mohammedans as 'kafirs'. Christianity does not lag behind and uses the appellation 'heathens' for non-Christians. Thus, religions divide humanity into self-contained and exclusive units. This leads to disunity and strife. Mothers cannot be free from this baneful influence of religion. In fact, they are not. So long as mothers do not cultivate a scientific outlook, there is the danger of society disintegrating due to intolerance, hatred and wars.

'What is a scientific outlook? That nature is self-sustaining, that it was not created, and that the universe is law-governed are some of the postulates of science. Life has evolved from inanimate matter at a certain stage of evolution. Thereafter, science learns that reason inheres in the human being. He is essentially rational. He begins to ask "How, why and what". By seeking answers knowledge grows. Science depends for its sustenance on the logical thought-process and experiment. It starts with a hypothesis. If further experiments deny the validity of the hypothesis, it is discarded. Otherwise, it is accepted. Science has no gods. It questions and examines. On the other hand, religion believes in absolutes. It postulates a God, a creator. It enslaves the human to God; it enfeebles the human being. It kills the capacity to reason and demands blind belief and surrender. Thus, a religious person ultimately ends up either as a slave or a robot. Either way the consequences are harmful.

If women, and especially mothers, are not imbued with scientific spirit, the children become the worst sufferers. Such mothers cannot bring up their children in a healthy manner. They create illusions in the minds of children about ghosts and sow seeds of anxiety in their minds. They inhibit the mental development of children by inculcating in them ideas of casteism, religious bigotry, nationalistic chauvinism, and linguistic fanaticism. They promote blind faith in children and thwart the growth of free enquiry and discretion. They

do not care for children's education. They will oppose women's education. They will instill false ideas into children. They will encourage children to believe that men are superior to women and thus contribute to the superiority complex on the part of men. Even when they innocently threaten the children with 'I will tell your daddy about your misdeed', they unwittingly generate a feeling in the minds of children that the father is superior to the mother. Instances like this are plenty. One can go on at this rate. But these are enough to drive home the point about the necessity of mothers acquiring a scientific outlook.

in order to adopt a scientific attitude, the mothers have to take certain steps. First, they must desist from blind belief. They should not accept any word, text or scripture as authority. They should not repose faith in any prophet or saint. They must develop the capacity to observe and study any theory. They must ponder over it. They must come to a decision about it and then only implement it in their lives. A human being is endowed with reason which has to be exercised.

Mothers have to know about their own bodies. They must have elementary knowledge of physiology. They have to be acquainted with fundamental principles of health and hygiene. They should go in for education. Education does not necessarily mean acquisition of degrees. Education is that which brings out the latent talents of an individual and helps in the unfoldment of the personality. It is not hidebound by age or any vocation. It is meant for all. Next in importance is the cultivation of the ability to discriminate and use the ability of discretion properly. It is deplorable that the present-day State is encouraging indirectly, sometimes directly too, spiritualistic and idealistic thought though the Constitution enjoins every citizen to cultivate a spirit of enquiry and a scientific temper.

A superstitious woman will not only harm herself and her children but thwart the advancement of her husband. She will be a millstone round his neck. Unless scientific spirit spreads, there is no salvation for the womenfolk; there is no progress for the society. When this truth is realized by men and women who care for society, when women get over their mental slavery, then only will the children and husbands be liberated from the thwarting forces, and traverse the path of liberty, equality and fraternity.

## WRITER AND COMMITMENT

It is normal to state and restate that a writer should have social consciousness and be imbued with the spirit of commitment. Another viewpoint is that a writer is an absolutely free being. He can soar unfettered in the skies of imagination; he is bound to follow his flights of fancy. These two views need consideration and deliberation in depth.

Every person who writes cannot be termed a writer. Man, by his very existence, has the capacity to think and imagine. He can conceive ideas. When those ideas find expression in an artistic manner they constitute writing. When a person sees a thing or scene, he observes an event; he imagines an idea, and he becomes possessed with the emotions created thereby. These emotions seek expression. In that ecstatic state he either speaks or writes, or paints or moulds. That spoken word, that sound reduced to writing when it is beautiful, charming and appealing deserves the appellation 'writing'. The rest is the usual wordly claptrap. Propriety in the selection of the word, charm in a word picture, beauty of letters, style, variety, beauty and harmony of ideas, and such ingredients go to make a writing.

For whom does the writer speak and write is a question to be squarely answered. One section of the people is always ready with the answer. Its reply is that the writer writes for himself just like the cuckoo sings for itself. Accepted! Why does he read his work to others? Why does he print his writings and sell them to others? Here comes the real explanation. Man is a social being. Hence he craves for and seeks the sympathy and admiration of his fellow human beings. If the listeners and the readers can recapture the same emotional experience as the author has had while listening to or reading his work they can feel pleasure and happiness. Otherwise, they will disregard the work. This means that there must be a common bond between the reader and the writer. This bond depends upon the civilisation and culture of the society. Civilizations may vary. In the past we might have travelled in double bullock carts. We have ceased to do so now. Why for that matter, cultural forms might have changed but the human values forming the very

basis of culture do not change with times. Love, sympathy, tolerance, urge for freedom, search for truth and the spirit of fraternity are some of those human values. When individuals constituting a society accept these values on the whole-implicitly or otherwise-they come nearer to one another. That is how a listener or a reader of a writer's work can live through the same experience as the author. The reader admires the writer and respects him. Every human being craves for recognition, sympathy and admiration from others. That is human nature. It is not a weakness. But a writer who aspires always only for recognition leads an artificial life; he deserves condemnation. If sincerity and integrity are lacking in an author he is not worth the name of a writer. Works propounding different views and propagating different philosophies of life just for the sake of publicity and propaganda are bound to be rejected as undesirable.

If social consciousness is said to be an inherent quality of a writer one has to be certain about what it is. A writer is said to possess social consciousness when he or she has some idea about how the society has evolved up-till now, how it is evolving, how it should change, and what sort of social transformation is desirable and possible. This word, 'Social Consciousness', has become current after the ushering in of the age of progressive literature. The propaganda was so great that it almost came to be equated with Marxist outlook. In fact it need not be so.

What is the purpose of a literary work (*kavya*)? One comes out with the answer that it is bliss arising out of literary excellence (*Rasanandam*). Another says that it is universal well-being. The third group opines that it helps in the evolution of social progress. Differences do arise when meanings are sought to be given to these phrases or when there are attempts to interpret them in terms of life. It is natural. But there is bound to be unanimity on one aspect. That Man inherited certain qualities of the animals, and that Man yet belongs to a peculiar and distinct species is the basis of common agreement among the differing views cited above. Therefore, whatever lifts Man from his animal existence and ennobles him is good writing. On this point there can be no disagreement.

We often say that a writer should be committed. What do we mean by commitment? Is it commitment to a particular ideology? Or, is it interest in and respect for human values? These questions pose a challenge which has to be met. Ideology is a self-contained system of ideas. If there is no opportunity for reception of new ideas, if there is no chance for growth in that ideology the commitment to

an ideology on the writer's part leads to elimination of the spirit of enquiry. The windows of his mind will be closed. That is an undesirable event. A writer must necessarily have respect for human values. No doubt we have in our midst unbridled freethinkers who argue thus: 'I do not, and need not, care for others. I write what I choose. I care a twopence whether the society accepts or rejects my work'. Art may find a place in their works. The reader may get thrill and enjoyment out of the same. Whether a literary work brings man down on the inclined plane of life to an animal existence or whether it ennobles him and raises him higher and higher from his base nature ought to be the touchstone for assessing a work. If that test is applied the works of these licentious 'free' writers do not deserve acclaim.

In reality, the number of writers without any commitment is small. If a writer has no commitment towards human values it means that he entertains feelings of attachment to animal instincts and urges.

As the word 'Commitment' has been defined and explained all along as commitment to the ideology, policy and programme of a political party, that word has not attained nor attracted the status and respect that it deserves in the world of writers. If, on the other hand, we give it the connotation that it is regard and respect for human values, then that difficulty vanishes into thin air. It is desirable that writers should take to such an enterprise. Let us hope that an effort of this kind will bear fruit.

## WOMEN'S ROLES IN CINEMA

Nowhere in the world at any time do we come across a film without a woman in the story. The producers by and large are depicting nothing but degradation, surrender, submissiveness and obedience in the woman characters. To this day a film accepting the individuality, right to equality, status, dignity and position of women, worth the name is a rare phenomenon.

If we ponder over the texture and tenor of the films of the present day, feelings of pain, despair, despondency and disgust spring within us. At the end of the film, the woman falls at the feet of her husband. The producers strive hard to convince the viewers that the woman will go astray or will become spoilt if she steps beyond the threshold of the home. The ultimate fate of a woman humiliated and raped by a vicious man is to marry him. The message is sought to be brought home that society will be gladdened at such an outcome and that otherwise she will be an outcast. The only other alternative is that she shall end her life. The woman should submit to her husband even if he torments and commits atrocities against her. She must suffer gladly with a pleasant face and with a tolerant spirit his dominance and male-chauvinism. The producers characterise the woman who gets a divorce as haughty and arrogant. The director shows an educated woman as horribly proud. He depicts a working woman as not only non-submissive to her husband but also as one who rejects him. The woman social worker is painted as a doll in a show case. The woman who works for the emancipation of her sisters through women's organisations is depicted as one who neglects her family responsibilities and duties. The idea that marriage is to be preferred to education is emphasised. If any woman decides to remain unmarried, she is said to have grossly offended the moral code and there are allegations about their chastity. The underlying thesis in all films is that a woman is a weak creature (*abala*), that she is like a creeper, always needing the support and protection of men. The idea that the husband's violence is the essence of an oppressed woman's life and that the solution to her problem is rebellion is ignored. Until now, we do not have a film with artistic values conveying such an idea. Thus, such a wonderful and powerful medium like the cinema has become futile in respect of women.

The producers plead that they will be financially ruined if they show on the celluloid the rebellion of women. The directors argue that they are bound to make films in accordance with the taste of the audience. Story writers admit their helplessness when they say that they write stories, dialogues and screen plays in accordance with the likes and dislikes of producers.. The last but one category is the acting world. The cinema actors frankly concede that they act as per the dictates of the director and the producer. Finally, the film goers come into the field. Their contention is that they go to the picture house for rest, entertainment and even for killing time. They see pictures to escape from the problems that they meet everyday in their families and work-places. Thus, each category of people seeks to avoid its culpability and transfers the blame onto the shoulders of others.

Today the film field has become a large-scale industry. As the capital outlay grows, artistic values go down and commercial values gain prominence. Technological advance is the order of the day, human values are disregarded. In some cases, films are produced only for the sake of Government subsidy. Some films are just instruments for transforming black money (unaccounted money) into white. In this state of affairs who cares for women's progress? The producers have turned their attention to themes based on sex and crime thereby debasing human taste. The reason is simple. It is the craving for money and nothing else. That is why the number of films is growing but the quality is declining. Cinema is the medium through which ideas of good and bad can be conveyed and communicated to the people. Who has given the right to the producers to provoke barbarous, obscene and immoral emotions in the audience? Do they not have any social responsibility? When the producers are confronted with this question, they try to evade the consequences of their crimes by proclaiming that the people are to blame for the deterioration in standards.

In the 1930s and 1940s films were produced with an emphasis on art, social purpose and social consciousness. Writers wrote with revolutionary fervour and concern for literary and cultural values. The directors helped in producing films with useful and purposive themes. They are imbued with the love of art and a spirit of reform. Their aspiration for monetary return is secondary. Yet, they did not incur losses. On the other hand, they gained name and fame.

Let us have a look at the woman characters in the films. Even the names of the films hint at the nature and character of those

roles. 'Servant (*Dasi*)' - not the recent one - 'Womanly Life', 'So Many Like Me', 'I Too Am Born a Female', 'Strength of Tali', 'At Husband's Feet', 'Woman Without Shelter', 'Women of Need', 'Desire and Tali' are some of the names of the films that strike our memory. Some of them have been recipients of awards too. Why is it so? It is because the reviewers and selectors are mostly men. Ninety per cent of the film-goers are wedded to old, orthodox and traditional ideas. They like the woman to suffer, and the inequality of women appeals to them. The 'best' films have to be differentiated from 'good' films. Social purpose is different from technological excellence. Even a film without social significance but with a good story, captivating music, artistic brilliance, technological excellence and acting of high standard can contribute to it being acclaimed.

Scenes with half-naked women have been growing in number. It is indeed not wrong to say that films without the dances of Jyoti Lakshmi, Jayamalini and Helen—to name some, are few in number. Obscene scenes without any decency or culture are palmed off as love scenes and sometimes even as comic scenes. Indecent songs with double meaning abound. Duets suggesting sex have become a common feature of almost every film. Less said the better about delineation of woman's roles. Even in a good film like 'Sankarabharanam', Tulasi, the victim of rape has to lead a miserable lonely life. In 'Saptapadi' (Seven Steps), the woman who loves a man beyond her caste is forced to marry her mother's nephew. She longs for the husband's company but the husband dare not accept her for she appears to him like Goddess Kali. Then the grand-father marries her off to the former lover. Now the role of the woman is that of a puppet. She dare not express nor act according to her volition. In the film 'Nagna Satyam' (Naked Truth), a woman was raped in a police station but we do not find any scene of women protesting and demonstrating before the police station. The director of this realistic picture is said to have stated that as he did not come across any women protesting, he did not put that scene in the film. Is this realism? Does realism mean only reflecting the society as it is?

Some directors are no doubt projecting the true state of affairs in their films. It is also true that they are not acting as mentors. This aspect assumes importance. The film 'Lakshmana Rekha' (Lakshmana's Boundary) gives the message that a woman's life is to be confined within the four walls of the home and that a woman transcending those bounds will be treated as depraved. That education is not important in a woman's life is the essence of 'Swargam Narakam' (Heaven and Hell). In one picture, a scoundrel

who ties tali round the neck of a girl who is unconscious under the influence of a drug is treated as the girl's husband. In another, the perpetrator of rape on a woman is forcibly married to the victim. In a film of a well known woman producer and director, the woman begs her husband to break the tali round her neck. The woman therein does not have the initiative or courage to remove it herself. Our aim and object should be to encourage the rebellious attitude on the part of the women. The story of another film ends with the wife, whose character was earlier suspected by her husband, falling on the feet of such a husband. The story of a popular picture is desertion by a mother of her son who has stood by her in her life of turmoil, to surrender herself to her husband who has ill-treated her earlier and killed her daughter. In Mogudu Kavali (Wanted, a Husband), the husband proclaims his sovereign powers over his wife and talks of licence granted by God to kick her, and proves it by beating her.

Films without scenes of half-naked women, sexy dances and rape are scarce. The directors are treating a woman as a sex symbol. They assess her spirit of tolerance by the degree of her submissiveness to her husband. The greater the tears she sheds, the greater is the income of the producers.

The reasons for this miserable portrayal of woman characters are many. Orthodoxy, traditionalism, despicable attitude towards women, fear on the part of the directors that they will incur loss if rebellious stance of woman is given a place in the film, selfishness, lack of artistic taste among the audience and, lastly, Government's indifference, all, contribute to this obnoxious situation.

What is to be done to remedy the situation? Subsidies have to be given to producers of films which go to enhance the prestige and status of women. Reformists and artists have to strive for developing good artistic taste among the audience. Enlightened women have to organise themselves and muster public opinion against bad films. They have to take up a campaign for their boycott of such rotten films. Propaganda has to be launched to condemn such producers, directors and the actors. In this big task the technicians, film viewers, cinema journals, Government and the Censor Board have to play their roles and do their duty. The cinema newspapers have to criticise without fear or favour. It is just not enough for women to become conscious about the wrongs done to them. They must fight back with organised strength and in a spirit of revolt.

## CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

Civilisation and culture are the two eyes of the body of the society. They can even be described as two sides of the same coin. Culture symbolises human development, whereas civilisation is a symbol of material advancement. Our very existence depends upon civilisation. Culture has a wider connotation. It has the capacity to impel the growth of civilisation. The entire human efflorescence depends upon human culture. It is culture that lays the foundation for our future life. It is the milestone in the march towards individual values, social progress, family welfare and the country's development. Progress in scientific knowledge and technological advance contribute to transformation of social life. Culture is the very basis of scientific enquiry. A cultivated mind and cultured life are inseparable and indivisible.

If so much importance and significance is given to culture, what exactly do we mean by it? The answers to this question are many and variegated. No two agree with each other completely. Everyone has his own thoughts and conceptions. Some define it on the basis of religion. Others delineate it on the basis of customs and traditions. Yet some others analyse it, taking into consideration the country, the times and the circumstances. Hence the attempt at definition of the word culture becomes a difficult and complex task.

Arnold, the British poet and philosopher has described culture as that which resursects man from the social anarchy caused by the industrial revolution. Fisher has opined that moral values are superior to all others in all aspects and holds that culture which liberates man from jealousy and hate is the noblest.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, has given greater importance to the mental development of Man by stating that culture begins where barbarism ends. Good thoughts and noble truths are the symbols of the culture in the view of a section of the people. Another group maintains that a person can be considered as a cultured one only when he utilizes all his energies, talents, capacities and means to further the cause of goodness to humanity. Propaganda for equality is the sine qua non of culture in the opinion of a few. Transcending the narrow boundaries of nationalism is commended

by some. The Communists argue that economic conditions determine the culture of the society and hence they lay stress on the nature and ownership of the means of production at any particular stage of society.

Spiritualists have a different conception of culture. Only that which gives meaning and significance to life can be called culture. Culture is not unrelated to religion. Devotion to God ennobles Man. Aspiration for realization of the Self should not be sacrificed at the altar of scientific advancement. Science devoid of spirituality is like a machine without its key part. Human life ought to be intertwined with religion and any view of culture bereft of a religious outlook is empty and futile. Culture cannot exist without religion. In fact religion is the outcome of culture. So run the arguments of religionists.

Our ancient 'Rishis' have clarified that "Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram' (Truth, Benefical aspect and Beauty) are the three qualities which lead humanity to the highest pedestal of glory and perfection. The Greeks have described culture as composed of truth, beauty and good nature. The Westerners by and large have emphasised truth, beauty and goodness. Intolerance, egoism, self-praise, derision of others, ostentation, pride, ignorance and such other qualities are signs of bad culture, if not lack of culture, according to the humanists. Love, tolerance, affection and mutual respect are symbols of culture as per modern thinkers. We may call these qualities as human values. The attitude towards these human values is termed cultural attitude by the intellectuals.

Culture means and involves mental transformation. The way in which we view it, adopt it and proclaim it is significant. Even a clean mirror does not serve the purpose if it is covered with smoke. So also is the case with mental capacities and attitudes. We have to blend our mental postures with our respect for human values. Then only will it flower into a noble culture. Culture denotes the nature of the man, while civilisation determines the means he adopts in the daily course of his conduct.

Though civilisation and culture are distinct and different, they are nonetheless interrelated. Man is a social being. The ways of the society are different and are of two kinds. The dress of the people, the language spoken, the machines they use, the transport facilities they have, the manner in which they grow their food, the methods of production, and their factories determine the society's civilisation. The system of ownership of factories, private or collective or communal, its political structure, its economic system, social milieu

i.e, caste, religion, language etc., all have a bearing on the evolution of society. They influence even the people's mental attitudes to a large extent. Culture is essentially related to mental attitudes. Society's culture is by and large, the culture of the individuals composing it. Thus, culture dictates relationships—that of brothers, master and employee, slave-owner and slave, and equals. To order another to obey implicitly without demur is termed an uncultured conduct. Deciding between good and bad after hearing the other side and pondering over it is a sign of culture. As civilisation changes with the march of times, so do forms of culture. For example, in the good old past there was the system of temple prostitution (Devadasi system). It was thought that but for its existence, the society would decompose and disintegrate. A caste was created and set apart to satisfy the lust of heinous men who longed for the company of women. It was never considered abhorrent then. As time passed, thinkers protested against the inequity and injustice of the system. They brought out its wrong nature in speeches and writings. Now it is almost non-existent.

Culture is based on permanent values. The outward forms of expression may vary but the values remain the same. Brotherly love, affection towards the young, friendship, confidence, sympathy, love towards wife or beloved, and morality do partake of a permanent character. The ways in which these values are shown in actual conduct do differ in form, depending on place, time and person. In Northern India, brotherly love is expressed by the sister tying Rakhi on Raksha Bandhan. In Southern India, it takes another form. A man is expected to be the protector of his sister's daughter. Thus, love and affection are exhibited in various kinds and degrees. Love between brother and sister, between mother and child, between beloved couple, and between friends is thus eternal in nature.

A country may progress in respect of civilisation but it may be deficient in culture. Hitlerite Germany is an example of this kind. It had advanced to a great extent in the spheres of science and industry. Yet, in the name of pseudo-science it had cruelly tortured, maimed and killed the Jewish people. It had pushed women into the kitchens. On the contrary we have the Arab culture which preserved the culture of Greece and the East and handed it over to its future generations. The Arab civilisation of those days was of a low standard. But in terms of culture, it could scale new heights comparatively.

We now come to the inevitable conclusion that simply because a society enjoys a high state of civilisation it does not automatically follow that it reflects a nobler culture. No doubt it is true that it is easier for a highly civilized nation to imbibe a good culture. Both civilisation and culture are highly significant factors to be considered in the march of mankind. They have to be striven for, cultivated and attained. Culture does not merely spring from a spirit of enquiry. Love and humanity are the corner-stones of culture. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to realize the worth of human values and to conduct our lives informed by them. That is our duty and that shall be our culture.

## LITERATURE AND SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

When we talk of literature, a question arises: When was literature born? What is the purpose of literature? What is literature? Why should any one write? How is a literary work written? Is literature related to any values? Does it influence society?

When man, who had just learnt to speak, began to express his innermost ideas in beautiful and charming language, literature had its origin. When the primitive man strove to express his subjective feelings of pleasure and pain in his own style, fine arts came into existence. The words used by the poet, either in his sorrowful or joyful moods are full of meaning and beautiful in form.

Literature has two aspects--the word and the idea, or the form and the content. The word is to be in accordance with the science of language. This is the traditional view. If this view was accepted then literature would not have grown to the present dimensions. The poser whether language or content is important is neither correct nor proper; the question is meaningless. Idea is the life; language is the body. They depend upon each other; one does not exist without the other. The dispute is irrelevant.

Expression of one's own thoughts in the form of ideas and that too in a beautiful manner can be said to be literature. That does not mean that whatever is said and written constitutes literature. A detailed explanation of a theory or a description of an event is not literature. The form must be charming and appealing to the heart. One must have sufficient practice of writing. There must be some art in the composition. For that, acquaintance with old literature will be helpful. The writer has to think of and imagine new novel ideas and figures of speech.

Society offers the base for poetic creation. Good poetry is never static. It is ever dynamic in form and content. The light and shade of the society find a reflection in literature. Whether it is an individual or an art form, they are shaped in consonance with the socio-economic system and the political circumstances. Yet their aspects are different.

From the very beginning there has been a mutual interrelationship between society and literature. Both have been progressing—one influencing the other. The writer is the creator of literature. There is no society anywhere in the world that has not felt the influence of literature. Even ancient literature and the epic literature gave importance to moral values. The only noteworthy point is that the values of those days are different from those obtaining now. The literature of the Middle Ages sustained the values of feudalism and monarchy. Literature of the later days has given prominence to social reform. Present-day literature represents socialist and egalitarian thought. Thus, there is a strong mutual relationship between the progress of society and the evolution of literature. Literary work, in whatever form, and expressing whatever idea, attempts, to reshape the society of the day. He responds; thoughts come as an upsurge. Ideas shape themselves. Imagination runs riot in the mind of the writer. He craves to express himself. He suffers anguish. He wants to convey his feelings to others. The content may relate to social, economic, political or psychological problems. If the society happens to be the centre of the writing, the work will have a universal appeal. If the centre is the individual it will have a human touch.

If a reader is to derive pleasure from reading a literary work there ought to be a relationship between the writer and the reader. In other words, it is the relationship between the individual and the society. The individual is a part of society. But each individual is unique. The culture of the society moulds the individual. Later, he may get over it. It all depends on the development of his personality. So long as the culture of the society binds the writer and the reader, the latter appreciates the literary work. If the bond is not there, then the reader ignores the work.

The writer usually does have an outlook of his own. He thinks that his view contributes to the welfare of the society. He writes giving prominence to that view. That is why it is said that the writer must have a commitment. It does not lie in literary excellence. It depends on his nature and temperament. Social consciousness is the life-breath of his work. The writer is not only a member of society he is also a guide, a prophet and a seer. The writer who creates good and noble works contributing to human progress is bound to shine with glory and everlasting name and fame. A journalist's language, ideas and erudition differ from those of a writer. The journalist simply conveys information whereas a writer gets at the essence of the event, brings it out with attendant emotions in the form of a creative work to earn appreciation. If a rose flower is

given to a scientist he will dismember it and analyse it. If it is given to a lady she will adorn her head. If it is handed over to a botanist he would expatiate on the origin and growth of the plant. But if it is put in the hands of a writer he will suffer anguish at the thought of its being crushed. That is the peculiarity and particularity of the writer.

When a writer witnesses an event, certain impressions take shape in his mind. They gush forth in words and thus he creates his work. The reader reaches those heights of ecstasy already experienced by the writer. Hence, it is evident that a good work of art can be created when the writer responds in his mind to the real events of the world. Only such works will last for ever. They are the books of all times. The rest are books of the hour.

It is maintained by some literary critics that literature ought to reflect reality. Others of equal eminence differ violently with that view. According to them only that work of art that delineates the impressions and responses of a sensitive mind can be termed literature. Suppose a corpse is on the road. A writing "road and road; corpse and corpse" cannot be realistic poetry. On the other hand, the feelings that the scene generates in the writer's mind are of consequence. One may feel pity for the poor man or one may get angry at the injustice done to him. Thus, the mood of the writer is conveyed to the reader through the medium of his art.

There is a lot of confusion about the place to be accorded to message in literature. It is repeated ad nauseum that the primary purpose of literature is to convey a message. In fact there can be no literature bereft of message. In some works it is apparent, and in others it is latent. Good literature ought not to be didactic. It is true that didactic art serves a purpose but, then, it is limited. It is temporary; it has no permanent value. Good literature pays attention to, and respects human values. The reader responds, imagines, ponders and shapes his life as he is influenced by it.

It is a misconception that a writer must observe an event before he writes about it. The poet is gifted with imagination. He soars in the sky of his imaginary world. Be it noted that his idealistic world, after all, has some basis in reality. The culture of the society, his psychology and his character constitute that base. The writer need not select or take the events described in his work from real life. Sometimes most of them spring from the flight of his fancy; there is no antagonism between the idealistic world of the writer and the real world. It appears to be so because of the prevalence and

preponderance of escapist writers. When a writer cannot bear the burden of the sorrowful feelings arising out of observance of unpleasant events, there is a tendency to run away from reality. Thus, he takes to escapism and roams about in an imaginary world of his own. Such escapist work of art may be pleasant reading for the nonce but it is practically of no use to the society.

## WOMAN WRITERS AND WOMEN'S PROBLEMS

Two questions usually crop up when we discuss literature in relation to women. What is the relationship between literature and women's problems? How do woman writers portray women's position and status in their literary works? Satirical references are made to woman writers to the effect that the literature they produce is confined to home. It is deplorable to note that a work is not assessed on its merits or demerits but is condemned as undeserving of notice because it is written by a woman. The following aspects should form the basis of literary criticism. Whether this work will be beneficial to the world of women fighting against tradition for the assertion of their individuality? Will it be conducive to women's welfare, or contribute to social consciousness? Does it help the enhancement of the freedom enjoyed by the women at present? Or, does it degrade them further? Does it support the present slavery of women by perpetuating the status quo? Or is it only limited to entertainment and flippancy?

It is a patent fact that the woman writers of the day by and large confine woman's position and status to the kitchen and the bedroom.

There are many problems confronted by contemporary women. Many of these problems do not form the subjectmatter of the works of woman writers. Prevention of 'sati', banning of child marriages, widow marriages, bride-price, etc., were tackled in the past by men through their writings. They fought for removal of social evils. It is heart-rending to note that the woman writers are not extending their gaze over all the problems women face in several sectors of life—social, cultural, economic and political.

The magnitude of the women's problems is not small. There are millions of stories of women's misery. In every home, there is a story full of woe and tears. It can be safely asserted that no woman lives, who has not, at one time or the other, thought of committing suicide to escape her travail. Her problems are variegated. Lack of individuality, financial helplessness, political  
stitution, child marriage,

compulsory widowhood, mental turmoil, abuse, violence, atrocities, rape, killings and torments by sadistic husbands are some of such issues.

The representation of women in the political field is grossly inadequate. Many woman writers feel and think that confrontation, struggle, rebellion and revolution are men's tasks. Hence, they keep politics out of their works.

The differentiation between men and women in the economic sector is grotesque. Wage rates differ; training is conspicuous by its absence. Because of economic disparity, a woman is forced to depend on men-folk. That contributes to and continues the male domination. Many a woman writer turns a Nelson's eye to this all important issue.

In the society today, the sufferings of the women in the social filed are countless. The woman has to be content with leading a life of an individual of a second order. She has been denied the right over her body. Property is acquired with her money but in her husband's name. She is termed weak, needing support and shelter for ever. It is pathetic to note that some woman writers also propagate such views which have been nurtured and spread by men for generations. It is a pity that many of them have not shed their belief in tradition and given up their attachment to superstition and heinous customs.

Culturally, the woman is looked down upon. Her utterances are dismissed summarily. She is made to believe that she is 'queen of the home'. Under that illusion, she suffers indignities and insults gladly. The men enjoy undeserved leisure, allotting the tedious and back-breaking task of child-rearing to women. It has been dinned into the ears of women for centuries that her place is at the feet of her husband. Some woman writers have imbibed these obnoxious ideas. It is reprehensible, yet true.

The painful question ever presents itself why the woman writers, who have been conscious of women's problems do not take up themes of women's liberation in their literary works.

Some woman writers take to escapism as they are not in a position of offer solutions to problems. They move away from the issues and write with strange and thrilling situations for providing entertainment. They wander in the world of imagination and unreality. One woman writer is reported to have stated that she is annoyed with hunger, poverty, disease and death and hence she would like

to write only about love and affection. It is unfortunate that books of such writers should command popularity. If the criteria for success were to be growth in the number of novels, printing of novels in journals in serials and the novels being accepted as stories for cinema films, then woe unto the country,. Such literature only spreads superstition, ignorance and obscurantism. It does not promote dynamism and forward-looking attitude.

To state that all woman writers are devoid of social consciousness, that they do not take up problems of life for their themes and that they write unrealistically, is far from the truth. But such writers who can suggest a solution to the problem with scientific outlook and with a social purpose are very few. Those woman writers who inveigh against the life of slavery of women, who condemn the inhuman conduct of men, and who give place in their literature to women caught in the economic vicious circle are in a minority. Likewise the number of those who have taken up themes relating to the inequality of women in the political sector can be counted on one's fingers. It is deplorable that many writers should support the status quo which confines women's position to the home in the name of tradition and culture.

By and large, the woman writers have up-till now written mainly on social and domestic themes. Literary works on political, economic and cultural problems are few and far between. It is the bounden duty of woman writers to take up all kinds of themes and produce good literature. In so far as they take up problems that confront them, their kith and kin and others as subject-matter for their writings, liberation of womankind comes nearer and nearer. They have to write with spirit of social consciousness, rationalistic outlook and regard for human values. Then, and only then can it be said that woman writers have discharged their debt to womankind.

## IS SOCIAL SERVICE POSSIBLE NOW ?

Why should any one go in for social service ? Whom should we serve ? How should social service be done ? These are the questions which usually arise in respect of social service. But then, another question confronts us. Whether social service is possible now is the question. Problems have been there with us from the very beginning of society. Social workers have been helping people individually and through organisations. But then, the problems of the earlier days were different. Today's problems are distinct in nature. As the present-day problems are complex in character the solutions for the same are necessarily difficult to find. An understanding of the impediments to social service at present will enable us to transcend them.

Oftale, the idea that one can be indifferent towards others and it is enough to care for and concern oneself with his or her family is gaining ground. The number of those entertaining such views is growing day by day. One is inclined to wonder whether there are sufficient number of persons in society who ask themselves whether a particular act of theirs is beneficial to the society around them, ignoring the view that a person need undertake only those activities that bring gain and profit to him and his kith and kin. We rarely come across persons oriented towards social service. The number of those who are actuated by social consciousness is low. At the same time, the number of problems to be tackled and solved is growing. We wake up every day to news of atrocities, rapes, beatings, burnings and cold-blooded murders. We become confused, not being able to decide upon priorities. Social service activities are limping due to lack of volunteers and financial resources.

There is another aspect that confounds us. How can assistance be given to those who are suffering and in trouble ? This is a complicated question that we have to face. Two ways come before us. To bring about awareness and consciousness is the first method. To help the needy is the second one. That we have to face the problems squarely with courage and confidence, awakening from the mood of helplessness arising out of the belief that one is bound to wallow in ignorance and poverty because of one's misdeeds

in past life is the need of the hour. To create enlightenment and motivation for progress can be said to be one kind of social service. Hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy, over-population, unemployment, the barbarous dowry system, rape, violence and atrocities against women are polluting our social life. To bring solace and comfort to those who are subjected to these evils and to stretch out a helping hand to those who are suffering is the second avenue of social service. Though these two paths are different in nature, they are part and parcel of social service.

To provide assistance by oneself is difficult. All those who are inspired by the cause of social service have to be brought together in an organisation. We call that group a voluntary social service association. The activists of that association can be termed social workers. Voluntary social service is the lifebreath of that society. The members thereof should be very sincere and efficient. They must be able to discuss the problems not only in a spirit of selflessness but with positive altruistic outlook. In order to run a hostel, to establish an hospital or to found a matrimonial counselling centre, a group of active workers with ability to run and administer the affairs of the organisation is an absolute necessity. A plan and a programme have to be formulated. The necessary financial resources to enable the association to implement the same have to be mobilised. All this work has to be carried out with skill, patience and efficiency.

The cooperation of those who are the beneficiaries of social service activities is essential. For instance, in the case of a working women's hostel the residents therein must entertain the feeling that it belongs to them. Likewise, in the case of a septic tank latrine, etc., the users should think that it is their duty to ensure its cleanliness even if a sweeper is employed to clean the same. Therefore, there must be a spirit of understanding, friendship, brotherhood, cooperation and solidarity among the members of the voluntary organisation and the recipients of aid.

The people's respect for social service is at present on the wane. The existence of several persons who go about doing social service under various banners just for the sake of name and fame, power and prestige, and lastly for profit and lucre arising out of Government grants is the cause for this deplorable attitude towards social service.

Genuine social service is the acid test of a person's character. To inspire self-confidence in the oppressed and suppressed people

with selfless spirit and service outlook is imperative. To aid those who suffer and are in trouble is the present-day task. Some are born weak as a result of heredity; some become helpless and disabled due to the vagaries of nature. Many people become refugees because of floods, epidemics and famine; their situation is miserable and deplorable. Deserted wives, prostitutes, insane persons, diseased men and women and orphans are large in number. Some people are oppressed by tradition and superstition; some others are burnt for not bringing in additional dowry. yet others are victims of violence and injustice. The unemployed, the hungry, and the victims of violence by husbands are losing heart due to excessive suffering. They become desperate because of their inability to escape from the vicious clutches of several social evils and resort to suicide. The first step in social service is to instil courage in the minds of the oppressed. To help them physically, financially and in terms of moveable and immoveable property, to get them aid and help through individuals, institutions and Government is one kind of social service.

Now, reverting to the question whether social service is possible nowadays it must be stated that nothing is impossible for a human being today. It has to be noted that the society of our times has become rotten. Corruption, immorality and black marketing have assumed gigantic proportions. Almost every commodity is being adulterated. Even the life-sustaining drugs are not free from adulteration. Communal disputes are on the increase. Discrimination on the basis of caste reigns supreme. Women are looked down upon. The population is growing at an abnormal rate. Unemployment is increasing. Violence and exploitation are rampant. Rapes and atrocities have become every day occurrences.

There is a feeling of despair when one is confronted with the questions as to how, and in what manner social service can be done in this situation. The idea that it is difficult to perform service gets rooted. Whoever is criticised for corruption is likely to take up the issue with the critics. Oh! how many obstacles! How many hurdles! Pondering over this situation makes a person wonder what he can do. Yet there are active workers who try to tackle the issues boldly. That a human being is a thinking animal, and that a person is given to hope, reason and will is the factor that impels persons to take up the difficult task of social service. Food, rest and sex are necessary for animals. Humans have an appetite for knowledge. Passion for knowledge and experience, and enthusiasm for life are inherent in them. They feel pained to see social ills. They are moved; they crave to remedy the situation. They cannot enjoy a

full meal when the neighbour is suffering from hunger. They will share what little they have with others. This passion and reaction are peculiar to human beings. Persons who do not entertain these feelings are living an animal existence. Social workers feel that it is their minimum human duty to help the oppressed physically, mentally, financially, and educationally.

This aid must be rendered with a spirit of service and not in a patronising manner. It can be categorically stated that it is a sign of insincerity to expect even an expression of gratitude. Only a person who can remain unmoved and detached even in the face of indifference, neglect, vilification, or opposition is qualified to undertake social service.

In order to take to social service, an individual should possess certain qualities of temperament. Patience, tolerance, good nature, resourcefulness, fortitude, and an urge to serve are absolutely necessary. The individual should not lose heart, when he or she is abused; likewise, he or she should not indulge in self-satisfaction when admired. Progress and regression must be received with equanimity. Money has to be spent, time has to be spared and energy has to be expended. The ridicule and allegations showered by those who admire them in their presence and abuse them in their absence has to be faced. There should not be an exercise of taking note of only the deficiencies in the character of the needy. The sufferers should be treated by a social worker in the same manner as a mother looks after her children. Sincerity and perseverance are just not enough in the case of a woman social worker; a realistic outlook is necessary. She must estimate her talents and capacities and then only choose the programme of action. Not only that; she must appreciate and understand the relationship between reform and revolution. Whatever work she undertakes, whatever deed she does must help the process of bringing about a basic change in the society. Otherwise a partial vision of society will result as is the case in the story of the seven blind men and the elephant. Such a view will not enable us to fulfil the objective of social service; that is to say, a society free from ills cannot be created. Therefore, a mature mind is the sine qua non of social service.

To mobilise financial resources for social service is a complicated problem. By and large the wealthy have antipathy towards social work. Desire and aspiration for social work on the part of the poor is useless. As financial aid from Government is subject to several rules regulations and conditions, there is always the danger

of monetary help of the Government not reaching the social worker in time.

The spirit of service and financial stability are not enough by themselves. Without organisational ability, social service programmes can never be fruitful and excellent. A spirit of understanding, sense of cooperation and feelings of unity and solidarity and comradeship are essential for the success of the programmes.

Integrity, steadfastness and talent are the foundation stones of social service. Florence Nightingale used to go about the patients' ward with a small candle with a view to look after the needy and suffering persons. The Ramakrishna Mission, Salvation Army, the Prem Samaj, and the Red Cross Society are some of the organisations which work with humanitarian spirit. The social worker has to carry on the programme with courage and persistence, not caring for name and fame. Therefore the saying of Bhartruhari, has to become our guiding principle. The lowly do not begin any activities on account of fear. The average person gives up the programme when faced with obstacles; the really great and heroic persons pursue the line of action chalked out earlier till they get the desired result. This message is to inform our lives. There is a place in history only for such people. Their lives are meaningful and significant. What other return can a social worker get except satisfaction, self-gratification and happiness in his work? The luxuries, the property we acquire and the offices we hold are not important. They can never be the aims and ideals of life. What good deeds have we done? To whom did we render help? Did we think or act beyond the confines of our families? These are some of the questions that ought to engage the attention of a social worker at each moment. Only when such social workers come in large numbers with redoubled enthusiasm to participate in programmes for social development will social service gain a prominent and permanent place in society. In fact the spirit of social service is latent in every individual to some extent or the other. It is not enough to become enlightened by oneself. The grave and heavy responsibility in social service is that of considering issues dispassionately and taking upon oneself the task of awakening people steeped in ignorance, and bringing about unity and solidarity amongst them. Every one of us has to attain the qualification to take up social work. Every individual endowed with a learning for knowledge, and possessing the capacity to discriminate craves to do social service. Social service is neither taken up at other's desire or command, nor is it given up at the behest of any other person. The pains and pleasures will be received with a feeling of serenity. The experience

al service itself constitutes perennial happiness. The individual wedded to social service does not wait to consider whether society has given something worthwhile to him in return. He is consumed with the ever present worry about the question of he or she has done anything good to society. To such a social service is not impossible; there are also no hurdles they cannot cross.

## PROBLEMS OF A SOCIAL WORKER

First of all, the woman social worker has to answer to her own satisfaction the question why and wherefor should social service be undertaken. Being charitably inclined towards society, she has to decide whom she should serve. Thereupon she has to assess her capacity and talents for service. Even if she gets affirmative replies to the above queries and enquiries, she still cannot escape the final question as to whether she has the requisite courage and determination to carry on the task even in the event of breaks or setbacks.

The problems confronting woman social workers are many and variegated. They range from small hurdles to very large obstacles. The quarters from which they spring are usually different and disparate.

Her troubles start at home as soon as she crosses the doorstep to devote some time for social service. Let alone, the mother-in-law, even the husband and children look askance at her. The husband's irritability-barring honourable exceptions-increases by geometrical progression. The children taunt her indirectly saying that their mother happens to be a visitor at their home. It needs a lot of courage and some insensitivity to uncomplimentary comments.

She sets out in right earnest from home to the abode of the disinherited and deprived sections of society. She is greeted with sullen looks. She tries to become friendly. She faces a stone wall. She adopts a chummy attitude. Then the ice breaks. Her queries are met with smiles. She returns home exhilarated. Next day she repairs again to the same locality. This time children invite her in. Young women gather round her. Lastly come the elders. They begin putting questions. Can she get them full meals? Can she get them employment? Can she get them decent quarters? Now it is her turn to answer. She fumbles and falters. Their faces are lit with broad smiles. She returns home humiliated. But then she is full of enthusiasm. She hates to relax or give up. Next day she goes again. This time young and old receive her with open arms as if she were their old friend. Derision melts away instead respect takes its place. She is accepted. She is looked up to for guidance, assistance and help. But then, she feels that she is unequal to the task. She realizes

that she has not equipped herself with the necessary expertise. She becomes humble. She understands that she has to learn a lot before she begins work. This salutary lesson has to be remembered by one and all.

As she gains knowledge about the magnitude of the problems confronting the people she comes to the conclusion that they can only be tackled by a team of social workers. A social worker must have awareness of the sufferings of the people and should possess a will to help them. Such persons, to start with, can only be found in the lower middle class for they too share the sorrows of the poor. The education that they have enabled them to ponder over the travails of the poor and suggest ways and means of eliminating them. Thus, the social worker is constrained to go in for the formation of Mahila Sanghams in order to obtain the assistance of a team.

In a way the founder of the Mahila Sangham is in for trouble. She must enroll members for the Sangham. She approaches ladies of her own class and neighbourhood. Here she meets with various difficulties. One lady slams the door in her face saying that her husband does not like her to participate in such activities. Another heckles her by stating that she is not a free person to do social service ignoring the claims of children. The third harangues her about the kind of social service one should undertake, but refuses to become a member on the ground that she does not have enough leisure. The fourth looks with disdain and almost throws away a five rupee note as if she were giving alms. Of course there will be some who get enthused and promise support.

When the Sangham gets going, it is ridiculed. Its programmes are pooh-poohed. The social worker carries on undaunted. Then starts non-cooperation on the part of some. But the work goes on. Then opponents develop a feeling of hatred and try to smother the Sangham by spreading scandals. Yet, the good projects are continued. The Sangham establishes itself and popular programmes are taken up. The people acclaim the sangham. At this juncture, difficulties crop up from unexpected quarters. Co-worker in the Sangham becomes jealous of the founder on the ground that she is getting publicity to the exclusion of others. In fact, publicity is sought for the Sangham. But then, to the outsider, the society is identified by the founder. Thus, her name becomes popular; naturally it arouses heart-burning. Jealousy breeds contempt and it leads to misunderstandings and squabbles. The Sangham gets weakened and comes to a standstill. Ultimately one section walks out. The Sangham loses

its strength and power. It becomes moth-eaten and truncated. The dissenting section seeks to establish another Sangham. The story begins all over again. Duplication of effort and fragmentation of the women's movement by excessive proliferation of Sanghams becomes the order of the day.

The social worker finds that the resources of the Sangham are inadequate; she seeks help from the rich who scoff at her. The poor are too poor to offer support. The lower middle class gives no doubt, but it is a pittance. The question of questions that faces her is: "How to run the Sangham?" She reads the schemes advertised by the Government. She approaches the Government only to be admonished by the officer with the gratuitous remark that voluntary associations are expected to be run on their own. She is shocked by the callousness of the officer battenning on monthly pay who draws up schemes ignoring the value of voluntary work. She gets dispirited for the time but there is still the fighting spirit left in her.

She exposes the hoarder, the black marketeer and the adulterator; she earns their hatred. She propagates family planning; religious leaders condemn her. She inveighs against male domination; men swear vengeance against her. She pleads for women's liberation; grandmas scandalize her. She criticises the political parties for not giving any responsible positions to women within their organisations; she is attacked as a feminist. Thus, vested interests oppose her. She preaches separation to women suffering at the hands of cruel husbands; fellow women disparage her: leaders of all religions join the chorus of condemnation. They shout "How dare you encourage revolt? Desertion is tantamount to unfaithfulness on the part of a woman." Even the victims of oppression oppose her advice. Bereft of the support of those whom she sets out to serve, she becomes disheartened. This is the last straw on the camel's back. The question stares her in the face. What should she do? Quit her social service. Oh, no. She begins to ruminate over the causes for her failures. "Is she at fault? or Is there something wrong with society?" She is in a quandary.

Why does not society lend her support? She looks round. The butterfly-social worker is there. No, she is everywhere. She thrives on Government grants. She sings praise to the powers that be. Publicity is her prerogative. She is sought after for implementing welfare schemes. Propaganda there is galore. Even the poor and disinherited fall a prey to this ballyhoo for some time. Later they come to understand the real state of affairs. They scoff and shun

butterfly-social workers. They become suspicious of all social workers. That is why even a genuine social worker is scorned by them.

How can she get over these obstacles? It can be done only in one way by learning to do social service without craving for name or fame; by maintaining a sunny and cheerful temperament, by being patient and persevering, by keeping up her morale even under trying circumstances, by being honest as a matter of principle, by maintaining integrity of character, by cultivating the necessary skills and techniques of social service and, above all, by cultivating a spirit of sympathy towards the weak, disabled and disinherited without at any time exhibiting any superiority complex, or a patronising attitude. She has to be a friend, philosopher and guide. If she follows the footsteps of illustrious social reformers like GURAZADA, KANDUKURI, and RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY, deriving inspiration from their lives she will not have any cause for despair. After all there is no greater reward than the happiness one derives in doing service.

## WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

Oftale we hear much about women's liberation and women's freedom. Thanks to the efforts of UNO and several voluntary agencies working for the betterment of women's position in the society, awareness about women's problems and their situation has been growing. The women's decade has contributed a lot to that healthy development.

In the last century it was left to the social reformers, who were mostly men, to strive for women's progress and to write books for women. It is deplorable that even in this century magazines meant for women are being produced and published by men. Not that male feminists are unwelcome but that women should lag behind in efforts and campaigns for their own liberation is an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Women's magazines are of two kinds-those run by men and those produced and published by women. The difference is important for ultimately it may be reduced to a difference in outlook. Most of the men fail to appreciate the women's point of view. In fact they may not lack in goodness. They may not have the necessary background training to understand women's issues from women's perspective.

At present most of the women's magazines, monthlies or fortnightlies are run by capitalist men purely with an eye on profit. They may engage the services of a woman editor here or there. The fact remains that the main aim is to make money. Incidentally it may be found possible to cater to the felt needs of women as a community, now and then, but the outlook remains the same. Greater stress is laid on the appearance, dress, make-up, fashions, table-manners, mixing in society of women. Their sole objective seems to be to equip women to play the role of wife to an official or executive or man of higher economic strata of society. Naturally they cannot be credited with any commitment to any philosophy or ideology beneficial to women.

If we deal with women's magazines run by women we are confronted with the question what sort of feminism they 'sell', in the

American sense of the term. We are aware that there are several kinds of feminism prevalent in society. Their appellations deserve notice. Liberal Feminism, Marxist Feminism, Socialist Feminism, Radical Feminism, Cultural Feminism, and Humanist Feminism are such varieties. The right to equality on the social and political planes is the distinguishing feature of Liberal Feminism. The struggle for removal of economic disparities among men and women on the basis of gender differences is the characteristic feature of Marxist Feminism. Incidentally it may be pointed out that these women adhering to that philosophy entertain the ideal of a socialist society and subordinate the women's struggle to the general struggle of the people for improvement of society. The latter was considered as weakness and to overcome it and rectify the defect Socialist Feminism was visualised. But alas! it stuck to socialism. This was unacceptable to many democratic-minded feminists for they were sure, that socialism would lead to concentration of power in the areas of politics and economics. Naturally there was anxious concern and rethinking. Ultimately cooperative common wealth was thought of as a substitute for socialism. Moreover this new school of thought upholds the autonomy of the Women's Movement. It stands four square against all forms of social order which oppress women socially, politically and economically. It opposes patriarchy. It fights sexual oppression of women. In short, it culls out the positive aspects of all the various forms of feminism and combines them into a composite whole. Some thinkers would call it as 'Humanist Feminism'.

Feminists of this century are naturally reluctant to be content with the tasks of encouraging women to go in for knitting or decoration of homes, interior or exterior. They would rather instil a sense of confidence among women. They intend to enthuse women to assert their independent personalities through education in the real sense of the term. Hence it is no wonder that they concentrate their attention on bringing about a change in the mental make-up of women. Resurgence in ideas usually leads to action and development. Therefore philosophical or psychological revolution among women is the sine qua non for development and progress of women. Let us take up the issue of 'female sexuality and sexual freedom' of women. Many men feel incompetent to look at the problem in its proper perspective. Even if some of them do consider themselves qualified to tackle the problem they may not be able to grapple with it properly. Only a woman imbued with the spirit of freedom of all aspects can fully comprehend the way in which women approach the subject of sexual freedom and suggest ways and means of achieving it. Many

men and women in society suffer from oppression by patriarchal values. Naturally, they get a distorted vision. Society demands that woman editors should be free to undertake the responsibility of encouraging the emergence of self-reliant, free and independent women.

**Present Situation:** The popular women's magazines are not in a position to serve the interests of women. It does not mean that one does not find any useful article or feature in their pages. We have to judge them on their whole performance. One swallow does not make a summer. An article here and a feature there is not going to determine the structure and texture of the newspaper. Many of these magazines dare not criticise patriarchal values. They appear to point the way to rebellion but they stop short at going to the logical conclusion. At any rate, in the name of harmony of society, maintaining the survival of humankind and contributing to the purposeful evolution of nature women's personality is subordinated to ulterior ends; it is submerged. Woman's autonomy is given the go by. Such a state of affairs is undesirable. It should not be allowed to continue.

Women have to take up the burden of creating a **Press** of their own, you may call it if you like, **Feminist Press**. That demands emergence of more woman free-lance journalists, columnists and editors to serve the **Cause** of women.

No doubt such a Feminist press is emerging. Each language claims credit for having one or two such periodicals. The magnitude of the task is so great that the present contribution amounts next to nothing. Conscious women and freedom - loving women have to take urgent and immediate steps to enlarge the scope of the Feminist Press, to establish it on firm foundations and give it a direction befitting the dignity and self-respect of women.

**Dangers inherent in the situation:** While valiant efforts are being made by progressive women to assert their independence and personality male chauvinists get into jitters. Taking advantage of existence of male editors of women's magazines they smuggle in their thoughts in the garb of women's writings disparaging the feminist aspirations and struggles. This is leading to confusion among the gullible section of woman readers, it also creates schisms among the ranks of women. Far-sighted women have to become aware of this stratagem of the male chauvinists. They have to expose the fraud, deceit and cunning nature of these infiltrators into women's press. This calls for alertness, vigilance and appropriate action on their part.

**The Future:** The age of superiority of man over woman based on physical strength is fast disappearing. This is the period of computers and robots. Contraceptives, artificial insemination, abortion and the technique of test-tube babies have freed women from the forced thraldom of motherhood. Women need not become mothers if they do not so desire. Their talents and capacities, their intelligence and wisdom, their power of expression and creativity are bound to flourish to the glory and brilliance of women and their Cause. Women will stand on an even footing with men in all walks of life including the press. Their instinctive insight into human nature, their qualities of love, sympathy and compassion, their spirit of forbearance, their innate intelligence, their capacity for all-round comprehension, their general concern for the children, disabled and the weak all equip them for further exploits in the fields of learning, service and action for the betterment of human kind.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND DEMANDS

Of late the Human Rights Movement has come to the fore. By his very nature and fact of birth the human being is said to have natural rights. Later, the American Revolution came out with a Bill of Rights. The French Revolution gave rise to a charter of the Rights of Man. The Russian Revolution has reiterated and enlarged it in certain spheres. The Indian Constitution has formulated Fundamental Rights. As time passed and centuries elapsed after the rumblings of dissent and protest on the part of women, they too have been given an equal status in the constitutions of the civilised world. One by one, the hurdles and hindrances to the onward march of women are falling down. Women, constituting half of humanity are coming into their own. The irrevocable link between human rights and women's demands is becoming apparent and manifest day by day. Yet, there is a great disparity between theory and practice. Benevolent laws are there to be flouted; experience is different. Social reality defies pious intentions. There is a lot of ground to be covered.

Laws are not the only ones to be changed. Women's situation has to undergo a transformation. No doubt, the Constitution of India has given the right to women to contest for legislature and executive bodies, say from the Panchayat to the Parliament. Yet, in reality, women are denied these rights. The key positions in the polity are not for them. The woman's progress is confined to flamboyant declarations and speeches. Capable and talented women are unjustly ignored on the ground of sex. This is the general condition. Two or three women in high offices do not alter the situation. One swallow does not make a summer. Naturally, all socially conscious women are intensely thinking over the issue of overcoming male chauvinism on the one hand and transcending the barriers placed by the present social system on the other.

The dynamic women of the country have to formulate a policy and programme for the emancipation of their sisters. Up-till now, by and large, lack of self-confidence, initiative and perseverance has contributed to the stagnation of the women's movement. Self-criticism is the need of the hour. A plan of action to be pursued with vigour,

drive and fervour has to be drawn up. Activity has to be directed toward three fronts. Implementation of beneficial legislation, translation of Government's promises and declaration into practice, and organization of public opinion for further progress should constitute the basic objectives and tasks before the women's movement.

Women's liberation is a complicated and difficult task. Just as it took centuries of struggle to overthrow the system of monarchy, it is likely that the struggle of women for emancipation will be spread over a long period of time. The category of people, say the men, who are occupying seats of power and enjoying several privileges and benefits are unlikely to part with them in favour of women without a struggle. In fact many a die-hard individual has declared to woman activists thus: "You are demanding equality. Why do you beg for it? Acquire it if you can." This is both an insult and a challenge. In a way, the poser does good to the movement. It will move on to the phase of struggle and confrontation from that of appeal to reason and common sense.

Women's progress and women's liberation do not mean hatred of men. How can one half of humanity hate another half? How can a woman hate her husband, father, sons, brothers and cousins? At the same time she does not like to be trampled upon and treated like an insect or a beast of burden. She is a human being. She has her inherent dignity and self-respect on which she can never compromise or surrender. Women do not desire greater privileges nor higher status than men. What they demand is equality with men. Except the additional capacity to give birth to children, the women's talents and capacities are on a par with those of man. Ofcourse, for her service to humanity in perpetuating the human race, she has to be respected and honoured.

Women's emancipation has to be all-round. It has to be total. It has to be in all sectors of life-social, cultural, political and economic. The truism that political democracy and economic democracy cannot exist one without the other is well known. The same principle applies to the woman. She cannot be made socially and culturally free but kept politically and economically a slave or dependant because the latter situation will endanger the former.

Some of the main demands of women are set out here. They relate to the women's personal and social status, political position and economic situation.

A woman has to be assured the dignity of her person. She has to have full control over her body. It is for her to determine how many children she should give birth to or, for that matter, to decide whether she should become a mother at all. It is for her to choose to go in for abortion or not. Nobody, not even the husband, has the right to violate her person. She shall not be abused, beaten, tormented, assaulted or raped. She, and she alone, has the full authority over her life. She is not a chattel to be disposed of, nor a non-person to be done away with. She cannot be forced into slavery or prostitution, nor can she be compelled to pay dowry to gain the status of a wife. She has the right, nay the privilege, to become a mother, if she so desires, though unmarried. Her right to motherhood has to be dissociated from marriage.

A married woman is not just 'queen of the home'. She is much more. She is her husband's life-partner. Her sphere of activity cannot be confined to the home nor can her husband's pleasures dictate her tastes and opinions. No doubt she alone can bear children. But it is given to both man and wife to rear children. Both shall aid and assist each other in running the home. She shall not be condemned to do dull and routine work all by herself. Her rights in respect of succession, guardianship, maintenance, adoption and divorce shall not be such as to be discriminating against her.

There must be a uniform civil code applicable to all Indian citizens and to all territories comprising India. In the transition period, personal laws shall be liberalized. Abuses like talak have to be done away with. Family courts shall be established to go into disputes between wife and husband with sympathy and consideration. Irretrievable breakdown of marriage and incompatibility of temperament shall become grounds for seeking divorce. Separation and divorce must be unilaterally granted. Alimony and maintenance shall be given to a spouse, taking into consideration all the relevant factors. The preponderant claims of mothers to the custody and guardianship of children has to be respected. The provision for restitution of conjugal rights has to be taken out from the Statute Book. The husband has to be prevented from compelling his wife to resign her job and live at his place of residence. Marriage Laws have to be amended to protect the rights of woman over her earnings or property acquired with her earnings. The unemployed wife shall have to get, on divorce, half the property acquired during her coverture by the husband. The wife shall get at least half of his property if he dies leaving behind children.

The woman shall not be treated as a perpetual ward by the society. An adult woman shall have the right and privilege to choose her husband. The Child Marriage Restraint Act has to be amended to make all child marriages illegal. The age of consent for marriage and the age of consent for sexual intercourse shall be different. Lastly, the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act (SITA) shall not be oppressive against women and discriminatory against them. The courts must become ever ready to come to the rescue of a wronged woman. Tardiness, delay and procrastination are defeating the ends of justice. Speedy and summary justice shall be provided to hapless and helpless women. The bureaucracy of the Government, and the police shall treat woman with respect and consideration.

Women's education has to be encouraged in all ways. Seats in educational institutions have to be reserved (at least 30 per cent to start with) for women as a measure of reverse discrimination.

The cultural atmosphere of the society has to be necessarily changed for the betterment of the women's position and status. Perfect equality should reign between the sexes. Male chauvinism has to disappear. Treatment of the woman just as a sex symbol or a sex object has to be abhorred. The craze for male children has to be eliminated from the minds of both men and women.

In the economic sphere, several changes become imperative. The disparity in the wages between men and women has to be eliminated. The principle, 'Equal pay for equal work' has to be properly applied. There should be no discrimination against women—as it is at present—in the matter of selection for jobs, training and promotion. In the name of a special gift of nature, it shall not be open to employers—private or public—to push women into dull and tedious jobs like those of nurses, primary school teachers, typists, secretaries and ayahs and debar them from other lucrative, prestigious and privileged offices and jobs. The society has to pay, through the Government, the woman sufficient salary during the period she is forced to nurse and rear the child during its tender age. The period of maternity leave with pay has to be enlarged. Provision has to be made for maternity leave without pay also. Of course, the demand for all these facilities may not be available for the second child. A scheme of disincentives in the matter of family planning, if not compulsory family planning leading to a limit of one child per family, has to be adopted because it will ultimately benefit the women. They will get enough leisure to enable them to obtain excellence in terms of their talents and jobs. They will further be

able to participate not only in the social and cultural life of the country but also in its political processes. Reservation of jobs for women is a must. Protective discrimination in the transition period has to be encouraged.

At present, the position of women in politics is deplorable. Their representation in legislature and judicial bodies of the State is far from satisfactory; it is insignificant. Women constitute 50 per cent of the voters and yet there are only 40 women in the Lok Sabha out of 544 members in 1991. The representation is as low as 7 per cent. Is it not absurd? Is it safe for democracy? Can it be termed democracy at all when one half of the Indian people-women-are denied adequate representation? The situation in political parties is far from different-a worse situation obtains there. There is need for women's participation in the cause of the party, but they are unwelcome in the higher councils. The sooner the situation changes the better it is for society as a whole. Ill-educated, backward women are a menace to the society, State and even to men. Usually, when neglected and ignored, they plump for authoritarianism and tyranny. Let men beware and bestir themselves. Reservation of at least 30 per cent of seats in the legislative bodies, from the Panchayat to Parliament, for women will go a long way towards saving the situation.

The demands listed here are neither high pitched nor unreasonable. It is for the reasonable and enlightened men to see the justness of the women's cause and support it. Many an enlightened man has supported, nay, fought for woman's progress in the past, i.e., in the pre-Independence period, especially in the nineteenth century. Why should men of the present times fight shy to support the woman's cause, if not champion it? Anyhow, it is for women to take a stand for themselves and fight for their dignity and just rights. They may take the aid and assistance of progressive men but let it not be forgotten that they have to rely on themselves.

**Annexure-I****Books in Telugu by Malladi Subbamma****HISTORY**

1. Women's Movement in A.P. (1860-83)

**CRITIQUES**

2. Hinduism & Women
3. Islam
4. Christianity & Women

**ESSAYS**

5. Modern Woman
6. Women's Decade
7. Women's Liberation
8. Oh Woman! March Forward
9. Women's World
10. We & Our Culture
11. Neither a slave nor a goddess
12. Golden Chains
13. Rationalism & Women
14. Stream of Thoughts .
15. Changing Society & Women
16. What is obscene?
17. Whose crime is prostitution?

**BOOKS**

18. Sexual Revolution
19. Defeat of Woman During Generations
20. Intimacy & Coexistence
21. Women & Social Reform
22. Human Rights & Women's Rights
23. Atrocities on Women
24. Women's Awakening after Independence
25. The Future Woman

**COMPILATIONS/SEMINAR - REPORTS**

26. Marriage, Today & Tomorrow
27. Women's Resurgence
28. Is Marriage meant for Progeny only?
29. Analysis of Dowry
30. Obscenity & Impropriety
31. Female Sexuality & Sexual Freedom
32. Women : Literature; Reform & Revolution

**NOVELS**

33. Continuance of Family
34. Love + Sex = Morality
35. Flaming Torch
36. Rays of Light
37. Darkness & Light
38. Is this Country Mine?

**CHILDREN'S NOVEL**

39. Rudrama Devi

**STORIES Etc.**

40. Another Turn To Motherhood
41. Tragic Stories
42. Women's Emancipation (MANIFESTO)
43. Fearless Feminist (Autobiography)
44. Individual Questions & Answers
45. Women: Fundamentalism
46. Women And Law

**TRANSLATION FROM ENGLISH**

47. 'Ideal of Indian Woman-Hood' of M.N. Roy
48. Atrocities on women
49. Women's Rights & Problems
50. Personal Laws & Women
51. Violence against women

#### **FOR NEO-LITERATES**

52. Where is equality?
53. Elimination of Superstition
54. Atrocities & Voluntary Associations
55. Awakening and Action

#### **Annexure-II**

#### **English Translations of Subbamma's Books**

1. Women Tradition & Culture
2. Saga of Women's Struggle
3. Islam & Women
4. Women's Liberation
5. Atrocities on Women
6. Human Rights & Women's Rights
7. Personal Laws & Women
8. HINDUISM & WOMEN.
9. Fearless Feminist (Autobiography)
10. Women & Social Reform
11. Women's Movement: Regional Perspective (1860-1993)
12. Status of Indian Women
13. Women in Changing Society

Malladi Subbamma, a rebel, reformer and revolutionary is a crusader for women's emancipation. During the last four decades she has gained recognition as a journalist, writer, social reformer and an orator. Agitator for a just cause, propagandist for a rational and scientific outlook, a feminist and a humanist her activities range from literature to politics.

She has written and published 55 books in Telugu on women's position and women's problems. Essays, novels, short stories, critiques, historical tracts and general books happen to be comprised therein. Some of her books were translated into other languages.

She has been closely associated with humanist, rationalist democratic, civil liberties, and women's movements and associations. She has held significant positions and is occupying important offices therein.

Honours and awards she had plenty. She was the first recipient of Durgabai Deshmukh Award and was honoured by All India Women's Conference.

At the age of seventy she is still active in campaigns for public good. At present she is playing a meaningful role in the anti-liquor movement.